

PLAIN SERMONS,

BY

CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE

"TRACTS FOR THE TIMES."

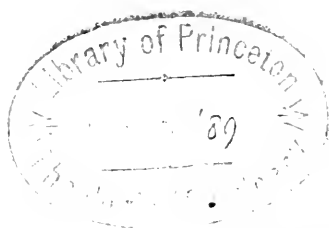
"We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.
"For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this
also we wish, even your perfection." 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 9.

VOL. VII.

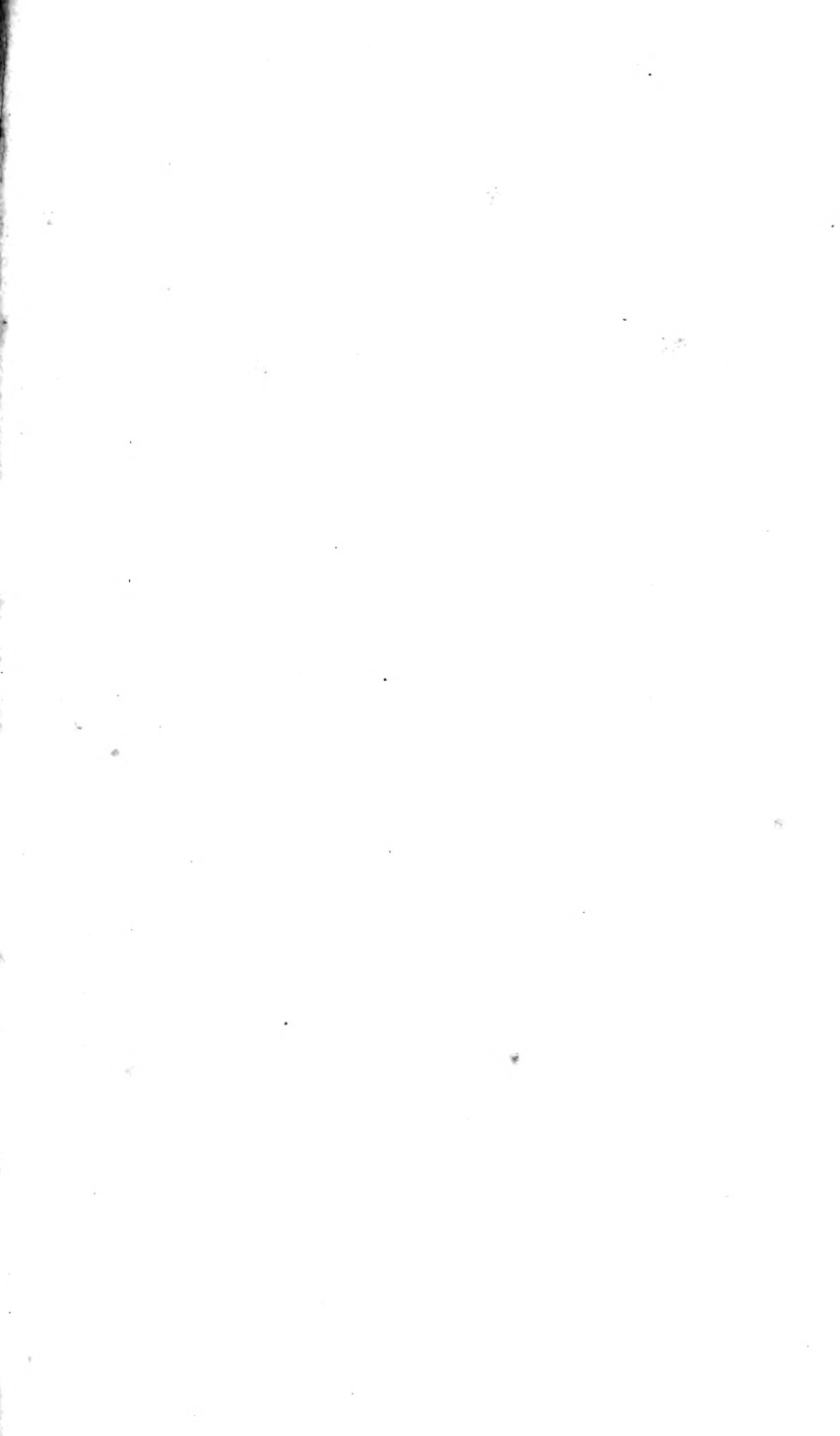
LONDON:

**FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, & WATERLOO PLACE.**

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S E R M O N C C I I .

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE FOR THE NEW YEAR.

ISAIAH xli. 10.

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My Righteousness.”

SUCH is the comfortable promise which the Church draws forth out of her divine stores, the Oracles of God, to support and cheer us now on the first Sunday of the new year.

In early youth, men are not so greatly tempted to fear or to be disheartened; but, unless they learn where to find true and substantial comfort, and unless they can look to something whereon their hopes may rest securely, each new year is sure to bring them discouragement and fear.

Young people, at first, expect to find this world full of enjoyment; and whilst their hearts are yet comparatively pure, their hopes strong, and their minds vigorous, they too often persuade themselves there is no danger that they shall ever be led into any gross or grievous sin.

But as years go on, we are all forced to learn, that this world is full of trouble and perplexity, rather than of ease and enjoyment; that we must expect each year to bring its share of sorrow and disappointment, yes, and of temptation also; and what is far worse, we find that these temptations prove to be greater than we are able to withstand.

Thus as we grow older, hope too often gives place to fear, and

cheerfulness to sadness and dejection. Those who in youth were sanguine and confident, become in advanced years timid and desponding. Those who at first were sure they could resist any temptation, not unfrequently in the course of time give up in despair the very effort to struggle against many forms of evil.

Surely it would be far better for us, if we were from the first to consider our real condition, to open our eyes at once to the difficulties and dangers that encompass us, and at the same time to the means by which God enables us, "if we be willing and obedient," to be "more than conquerors" over them all.

If indeed the sense of our danger could lead us to no security, then it would be useless for us to turn our thoughts to it; it might be as well to perish with our eyes blinded to the last, as to see beforehand the evils that are coming upon us, if there were no escape from them. But from the Bible we know most certainly, that although we are in great danger, we are not without a DEFENDER, nor without hope; and we are therein plainly taught, that to know our own misery and helplessness, and to have before our minds a view of our perilous condition, is a great step towards attaining deliverance, and preserving a sure hope and a substantial comfort. For in this our reasonable fear we look about for protection; when we see we are unable to defend ourselves, we seek some One more powerful, Who will have pity on us and protect us. Our thoughts are then turned to that great unseen Being Who made us, Who preserves us, and Who, as we further learn from the Gospel, so loves us, that HE gave even His only SON to save us by His death.

And then in the New Testament we hear St. Paul say, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His SON, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life¹."

We were cleansed from our sins by CHRIST's death, and still more now are we saved by His life. Neither does this mean merely that CHRIST, living and reigning in heaven, ever interceding with the FATHER, pleading the merits of His own sacrifice, and sending down continually the Gift of the SPIRIT upon His Church, does by this His life on high advance our salvation.

¹ Rom. v. 16.

For, more than this, CHRIST not only lives at God's right hand, our Mediator and Intercessor, but HE also liveth in us. "CHRIST liveth in me²," saith St. Paul. And that this gift was not peculiar to St. Paul, or to the great saints of those most holy ages of the Church, that the like grace is bestowed on all obedient and faithful servants of the LORD JESUS, appears plainly and certainly from what our LORD Himself says: "If a man love me, he will keep My words; and My FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make Our abode with him³."

And St. Paul again in other places: "Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates⁴?" and, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones⁵." So that if we be faithful and obedient Christians, if we be not cast out of God's light, and of the Grace unto which HE once called us, then of a truth CHRIST is in us, and we in HIM. We are bone of His Bone, Flesh of His flesh, very members and parts of HIM.

Nothing, in a certain sense, can be more plain and simple than this truth; it is taught to our children at the very beginning of their Catechism, and yet it is full of deep and hidden wisdom. It was at once most awful, yet most encouraging; overwhelming, yet beyond all things cheering and supporting. To it I often endeavour to draw your thoughts, because I do not see how it is possible for us to live as Christians ought to live, unless we call to mind, Who is in us.

But now with these thoughts before us, first, the remembrance of our danger and helplessness, and secondly, the contemplation of the God Who dwells in us to save, and justify, and protect us, let us put our minds to our text, as well as to one or two other verses in the first Lesson, for then we shall be able, I trust, to approach at least to apprehension of their blessed and most comfortable meaning. Let us open our hearts to receive this His promise, that HE will be with us. It is as though the Church set HIM before us now, speaking to each of us in some such words as these: "My servant, thou art entering upon another portion of thy short time of trial; hast thou found that each succeeding year brings its own sorrows, its own temptations, and that under those

² Gal. ii. 20.

³ John xiv. 23.

⁴ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

⁵ Eph. v. 30.

temptations thou art but too apt to fall ; and dost thou seem to thyself weaker for every trial ? Yet if thou wilt cleave to ME with thy whole heart, and seek to abide in ME, then fear not ; thou art My chosen servant, I am thine indwelling GOD and SAVIOUR."

But let us hear the very words of the Bible. "Thou art My servant ; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not ; for I am with thee : be not dismayed, for I am thy GOD : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness. I the LORD thy GOD will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not ; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel ; I will help thee, saith the LORD and thy REDEEMER, the HOLY ONE of Israel."

In humble dependence upon these most comfortable words, let us enter upon the duties of the new year, as making it our great labour, our one chief desire, that we may indeed abide in HIM, and continue to be held up and protected in our slippery and dangerous way by His supporting hand. For though His word of truth be, "I will not forsake thee," yet has HE also said, that if we will deny HIM, HE also will deny us⁶ ; and further warned us, that there are those who, while they profess to know GOD, do in their works deny HIM ; such are they who will confidently claim His favour at the last day, as having prophesied and cast out devils in His name, unto whom HE will profess, "I never knew you : depart from Me, all ye that work iniquity⁷. What a motive then have we to watch ourselves, lest, falling into sin, we separate ourselves from our SAVIOUR, our faithful Almighty Protector, who never would have forsaken us had we continued with HIM. But if we pollute ourselves with sin, if we learn to love the world, and to act by the rules of the world, we separate ourselves from GOD ; we withdraw ourselves from HIM, so that HE may hold us up no longer. Then do "our iniquities separate between us and our GOD⁸," and we do in a manner drive from us our Almighty Protector and indwelling SAVIOUR.

For we may apply to our LORD, as the Word and Wisdom of the FATHER, that which is said of wisdom in the Apocrypha.

⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

⁷ Matt. vii. 22.

⁸ Isaiah lix. 2.

“ Into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter ; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin ⁹.” And in the New Testament St. John has said : “ If we say that we have fellowship with HIM, and walk in darkness,” (i. e. in wickedness,) “ we lie and do not the truth ¹.” So that CHRIST will not dwell in us, nor we abide in CHRIST, unless we put away from us the yoke of sin, and strive to follow His most holy example and doctrine.

Wilful sin, whether it be love of the world, pride, envy, malice, or impurity, or what it may,—any of these indulged, even in thought, will separate us from HIM, as loving obedience will bring HIM nearer to us ; as HE promised in those most gracious words I have already repeated, “ If any man will love ME, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”

Nothing then, can be more certain than that, if we did only love and obey our SAVIOUR, we should have nothing to fear. No enemy could hurt us, no temptation enslave us. For then we should have the FATHER and the SON, abiding in us by the SPIRIT, and having THEM with us, we should be sure of being more than conquerors.

And now on this first Sunday in the year, let us draw near to GOD, and prepare to offer and present unto HIM (together with our holy gifts of Bread and Wine), our souls and bodies, as devoted and given up entirely and sincerely as living sacrifices to His will and pleasure ; being firmly resolved henceforth to lay aside, yea, to deaden our own wills, that we may altogether make His will the one single rule of our life. For most assuredly, if we would but thus truly give ourselves up to HIM, HE would on His part give HIMSELF more and more to us, so that we should ever continue one with HIM, and HE one with us. This is the true Christian life of union with GOD. And if we would continue in this Grace of union with HIM, praying and striving without ceasing that all our thoughts, and words, and works, may be suitable to such a holy state, then we should have no more cause to fear ; for if we cleave unto CHRIST, HE will never forsake us ; and while HE was with us, and in us, who could hinder us from being blessed ?

Oh how happy and blessed should we be, if we were not only frequent guests at that Holy Table, but if we really offered up

⁹ Wisdom i. 4.

¹ 1 John i. 6.

ourselves to GOD when we went thither, with a firm and hearty resolution, by GOD's grace, to live suitably to what we there profess : I mean, to the solemn vows that were made for us in our baptism, which we now are in effect to renew in our LORD's own near presence. It is a fearful thing to turn away from that Holy Table ; it is so like drawing back from CHRIST : surely it is actually refusing an opportunity of being brought nearer, and knit more closely unto HIM.

But of course it is vain, it is far worse than in vain, to come there, unless we do give up our souls and bodies to GOD's service. We never can expect HIM to be with us, to hold us up, or to strengthen us, unless we will walk in His ways, and really cleave to HIM.

Therefore " watch and pray always²;" for while you watch and pray, while you earnestly endeavour to keep from every thing displeasing to GOD, and while you diligently seek His grace by all His appointed means, HE will not forsake you, and you will have nothing to fear. But if you in any way give up your care of yourselves, or your communion with HIM in prayer, in reading or hearing His word, and receiving His Body and Blood, you are departing in heart from HIM, and then consider, to whom are you to go, when you have turned away from HIM ?

We have mighty and crafty enemies, who envy and hate us beyond expression ; and these are ever by all arts seeking our destruction : and how can we, poor sheep, think to defend ourselves against these wolves and roaring lions ? how can we expect to escape them, if we forsake our Heavenly Shepherd ? But if we cleave to HIM, none, no power in earth or hell, can pluck us out of His hand.

What folly then can be like the folly of forsaking HIM ?

² Luke xxi. 36.

SERMON CCIII.

CHRIST FOUND IN HIS TEMPLE.

ST. LUKE ii. 46.

“ And it came to pass, that after three days they found HIM in the Temple.”

YOU have just heard in the Gospel¹ how the Blessed Virgin Mother and St. Joseph for a time lost her most HOLY SON. They had gone up with HIM to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover, in obedience to the Law of the LORD : on their return HE was not with them. They sought HIM in the villages and on the highways ; they sought HIM amongst their kindred, and in the caravan or company of Galilean pilgrims returning, together with themselves, from the feast at Jerusalem ; but they found HIM nowhere. At last, when they were all but despairing, when they had become faint and sick with toil and fear, with desires and tedious expectations, they came into the Temple to pray to GOD for guidance and help in their distress. They came as knowing and believing assuredly, that if they could find GOD, they should not long fail to find the Holy JESUS. And their faith deceived them not ; for they sought GOD, and found HIM that was GOD and Man in the midst and circle of the Doctors and teachers of the Law.

Surprised with trouble and wonder, they began a little to expostulate in a tone of complaint with the most Holy Child.

They asked why HE had been absent so long from them, and

¹ For the first Sunday after the Epiphany. See the beginning of Bp. Taylor's Worthy Communicant, from whence much of the thoughts and some of the language of this sermon is taken.

had left them in sorrow and doubting thoughts ; as it must needs be when HE is absent from any of us.

“ When they saw HIM,” it is said, “ they were amazed : and His mother said unto HIM, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us ? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.”

This question brought forth an answer, which will be for ever useful to all that shall inquire after this Holy Child. As they complained of His absence, so did HE reprove their ignorance. How is it that ye have looked for ME as for one that was used to wander in unknown paths without skill, and without a guide ? Why did ye inquire after ME in highways, and village fields ? Ye never knew ME wander or lose My way, or abide anywhere but where I ought. Why did ye not come hither to look for ME ? “ Wist ye not,” i. e. know ye not, “ that I ought to be in My FATHER’s house ?” For thus I surely believe it should be translated, rather than “ about My FATHER’s business,” as it is put in our Bibles. Thus, at least, it has been understood by many wise and holy men in various ages of the Church. Fourteen hundred years ago St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, in the Isle of Cyprus, who himself spake and wrote the same language in which the New Testament was written, observed that our LORD by these words signified that the Temple in which HE then was had been built to the Name of GOD, His own FATHER, that it was His FATHER’s house. And whatever our Blessed SAVIOUR says in the Holy Gospels, we should regard HIM as addressing it to us, for our instruction and admonition. To us, then, HE says, “ Know ye not that I must be in My FATHER’s house ?” So that here, where GOD is worshipped, where HE loves to dwell ; here, where HE imparts His blessing and holy influences ; here, and here most especially, we are sure to meet our dearest LORD.

For this reason GOD is pleased to call the place where we assemble to pray to HIM and to hear His word, His house ; that we may the more confidently expect to meet HIM here, when we come to worship HIM. So that if any man ask where on earth is the special and favoured place of CHRIST’s abode, where we may with most confidence hope that HE will shew HIMSELF, where HE even enters into and dwells in us ? the answer is, CHRIST must be found in His FATHER’s house ; here, where His FATHER dwells and loves to meet His servants, here we are sure to find the LORD

JESUS. GOD descended and came first into the tabernacle, and afterwards into the temple in a cloud; even so now CHRIST comes to meet us here, clothed in the hidden mysteries of His Word and Sacraments.

HE has a house here below as well as in Heaven above. Here is the light of His Word imparted to us. Here is His dwelling, and here are His provisions; the table which HE furnishes for us. Here is the Bread that came down from Heaven. Hither GOD sends His SON, and here His SON manifests HIMSELF. The Church and the Holy Table of the LORD, the prayers of GOD's people, the Word and the Sacraments, the oblation of bread and wine, and the offering of ourselves, the consecration, and the Holy Communion,—these things are here, and are all the things of GOD and of JESUS CHRIST. And he that is much amongst these is there where GOD loves to be, and where CHRIST is to be found.

We must not surely think to find our SAVIOUR in the highways of ambition and pride, in the pleasures of wealth or luxury, or in the eager pursuit of any thing belonging to this world. These things are not to be found in the house of His FATHER, neither may they come nigh His dwelling.

But if we seek for CHRIST, we shall find HIM in the methods of virtue and the paths of GOD's commandments; in the persons of the poor, and in the blessed privilege of waiting upon the distressed; in the hours of our own most serious retirements. We shall find HIM in holy reading and pious meditations; in mournings for sin, and in the school of contrition; in the offices of religion, and in the house of prayer; in pulpits, in Churches, and upon altars; above all, we shall find HIM in our devout prayers, in the Word and in the Sacraments.

In short, if we come hither as often as we possibly can, and live accordingly when we are not here, then here we are sure to find our BELOVED, even HIM after Whom our soul longeth; and in Whom only we can find rest.

Sure enough CHRIST is here; here most especially does HE shew and manifest HIMSELF day by day to the humble, devout, and faithful soul.

For although HE is here, and here HE manifests HIMSELF, yet all do not see HIM here, but only the pure in heart; even as HE HIMSELF afterwards taught in the Sermon on the Mount,

saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD." So it was indeed when at the first HE came to His temple veiled in our flesh, forty days only after His birth; for the holy Simeon, the devout Anna, the blessed Virgin, the righteous Joseph, saw the LORD; but from other eyes HE was hidden: to the thoughtless and the worldly, to the self-willed and to the proud, the Child that day presented in the temple seemed merely the ordinary offspring of mean parents; only these faithful servants of GOD saw HIM that should redeem Israel, and be a light to lighten the Gentiles.

It is true that as HE grew older, and His hour drew on, the signs of His wisdom, and power, and GODHEAD, broke forth more clearly; and thus at the age of twelve years it is said, that "all that heard HIM were amazed at His understanding and answers." And so afterwards far more when the fulness of His power was manifested, were all men amazed at His teaching, and at His mighty works.

And yet how few even then saw in HIM so much as the "Teacher come from GOD!" still fewer were there to whom His FATHER in heaven revealed the secret, that HE was, as St. Peter and the Apostles confessed, "the CHRIST, the SON of the living GOD."

Now therefore, much more, when HE thus, in His childhood, began beforehand, as it were, to unfold in His FATHER'S house the Divine wisdom that was in HIM; though all that heard HIM were astonished, yet have we surely good reason to believe, that there were few, very few, who had hearts deeply to consider and remember the gracious words that flowed from His Divine lips.

And why do I say this? Because now also CHRIST is continually manifesting HIMSELF in this His sacred house. We are from time to time most of us perhaps struck with wonder and awe at what is read, or what is done here. Who is there that has not been at times awed, or moved by the wisdom and mercy of God's Word? or who is there that approaches that Holy Table, and has not at times at least felt trembling and amazement in his heart at the mercy vouchsafed to him, when he is feeding on the very Flesh and Blood given for the salvation of the world, when he is made to dwell in CHRIST, and has CHRIST given to dwell in him? But yet, after all, it does not follow, that the eyes of our soul are really opened to see CHRIST here, or our ears unclosed to hear His Word, or our hearts so softened to be deeply sensible

of His love. Wonder, strong and even agitating feelings for a time, (though it were well if we saw more even of these,) yet these, I say, are no sure proofs that CHRIST has not been manifested to us in vain.

What are the proofs then? An habitual delight in God's house; an habitual reverence and awe here; and a continual remembrance, when we return to the world, of the things we have heard, and seen, and professed, and of which we have been partakers here;—these are the only sure signs that we do not come here in vain—that we here learn of CHRIST, and have a real communion with HIM.

For if this be in deed and not in name only the LORD's house; if HE really does dwell here, and shew HIMSELF here; if this be the place where of all others we are most sure to find HIM; consider well, I beseech you, my dearest brethren, ought we not all of us to be more anxious to come here than we are, the very best of us? You see that the Church here teaches us out of the very words of the Gospel, that it is in God's temple we shall be most sure of finding CHRIST.

Why then are not all anxious to come here as often as possible? If you do believe that CHRIST is here in the midst, as often as two or three are gathered together here to worship, why do ye not oftener come to meet HIM? Is it that ye do not believe HE is here? Where then is your faith in His Word? for HE HIMSELF plainly says, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them²." For it is vain to object that there is no mention here of the Church in particular; but it is only said, "where they are gathered together." For although this promise might to a certain degree belong to a Christian family met together for prayer, yet surely it must be plain that in no way can we make so sure of its fulfilment to us, as by coming to this house, which is as much, yea, and far more to us than the temple ever was to the Jews. If CHRIST then was to be sought for and found in the temple, much more shall we find HIM here in His own Church, where HE dwells, not as of old time, in Jewish types, but in the fulness of blessings imparting His very Self to us through the mysteries of a more perfect dis-

² Matt. xviii. 20.

pensation. Consider then, I beseech you, whether the wilful neglect of repeated calls to attend GOD's service here, may not provoke CHRIST to hide His Face from you, to withdraw HIMSELF from you, and to cause that you should seek for HIM in vain.

But some may object, that they do not see that those who go often to Church are better than those who go seldom ; or they may say that when they went oftener themselves, they did not find themselves the better for it, but that rather the prayers grew wearisome.

Now, in the first place, with respect to any such judgment of other people, there is after all no great dependence to be placed on that ; we know so little of what is going on in one another's hearts, that it is very possible a person may be very much the better for his constant use of some of the means of grace, though we may not see that he is so. But, again, it is by no means said or meant that the mere act of coming here will insure your being any the better. If you bring your bodies here, and leave your hearts engaged in your worldly business or worldly pleasure, this is not to come to CHRIST, Who is here ; for that which HE first and above all asks of you, is the heart.

Neither, again, have we any promise of receiving any blessing, or of really approaching CHRIST here, unless we bring a will submitted to His will, a desire to learn what HE would have us to do, and a full determination to strive our best that we may duly fulfil it. Thence will ever spring, not only a meek and attentive hearing of GOD's Word, but an earnest and continued endeavour to join in understanding, heart and spirit, in those holy prayers which are here offered up.

In short, we must come here, presenting our souls and bodies a living sacrifice unto GOD ; so only can we expect to discern CHRIST here, or to be made partakers of HIM.

You must guard against wandering and worldly thoughts ; for it is only in proportion as we drive them out, that we can so seek for CHRIST as to find HIM even here. And be persevering and earnest in this endeavour ; and though you should find that again and again these wandering imaginations overload your mind, and make a separation between you and your GOD, do you still again and again cast them off, praying earnestly and continually for His help in so doing. Try and think of the time when it will be

too late to pray, and consider that now God's ears are open, and His hand outstretched to give you pardon, and grace, and life, in HIM, if you will but ask it with earnestness and unceasing cries; cries not loud but deep,—out of the depths of the heart; such as those which the Psalmist signified, when he said, “Out of the deep have I cried unto Thee, O LORD³.”

But above all remember this. The great means for learning to pray attentively here, to listen with profit here, to be partakers of CHRIST here (by a faithful receiving of the LORD's Supper), is this: to keep constantly in mind, at home, and in your employment every day, what you hear, what you do, what you see, what you receive, when you are in Church.

For what often ruins all the profit we receive here is this: that most of us, as soon as we go out of Church, shake off what restraint and awe that may be on us when here, and become engaged again as deeply as ever in worldly employments, or trifling carnal pleasures, and forget that we have been with CHRIST,—forget what we have been taught, that “CHRIST is in us, if we be not reprobates.”

Then, in consequence, when you come again to Church, your minds and hearts are hardened, and it is more difficult to make anew any impression; or, if any be made, it is much sooner wiped away.

So great is the danger of forming a habit, as many do, of losing at home what we gain at Church.

Therefore, I would advise you on this sacred day of the week especially, when you can surely secure yourself a little leisure to consider what you have been hearing, what you have been saying; what prayers you have offered, whether any or what good thoughts and intentions have been awakened in your minds; and if you have received the LORD's Supper, think Whom ye have received to dwell in you.

And then think how you can spend next week, and all your life to come, more according to GOD's will; consider wherein you may return to GOD, and live more as becomes one whose chief desire and care is to abide in CHRIST, and to have CHRIST abiding in him, and who for that end is looking unto JESUS;

³ Psalm cxxx. l.

studying how he may please HIM best, how he may do His will, and follow the pattern HE has set us in His most holy life. Be it your great study, that you may be fully partakers of His grace in the Holy Sacraments, that you may ever be drawn into closer union with HIM more and more on earth, till at last we may hope to find HIM (so as never in any degree to lose sight of HIM any more) in Heaven.

Consider, when you return home, by what kind of life you will best fit yourself to receive more heavenly light from His Word, to enter into closer converse and communion with HIM in prayer, and so to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood here at His Table, that your body and soul may be knit unto HIM. That thus continually cleaving to HIM here, you may be made like HIM, and see HIM face to face in joy unspeakable in that true and heavenly Temple, of which these His Churches on earth are the appointed types or images.

Here, as sinners, with souls and bodies defiled, being yet begotten again unto a lively hope, we behold our LORD veiled in His Word and Sacraments; there, if GOD have mercy on us, and count us worthy, we shall find HIM for ever, and see His face without any earth-born cloud to hide HIM from us.

S E R M O N C C I V .

GOD BRINGING GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

ROMANS xi. 30—32.

“ For as ye in times past have not believed GOD, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For GOD hath concluded them all in unbelief, that HE might have mercy upon all.”

ST. PAUL is here speaking to Gentile Christians, that is, to those who were not of the Jewish nation, nor of the race of Abraham.

These Gentiles, at the time our SAVIOUR came into the world, were wholly given up to the worship of false gods and dumb idols; excepting only a very few persons here and there, who had learnt some little of the truth from the Jews. The Jews were then the only chosen people of GOD, the only people who were taught how to serve HIM, and admitted into covenant with HIM. They were the children and offspring of Abraham, who was chosen of GOD to be the first father of that people which it was His pleasure to keep as His own, when HE gave up other nations to walk after the imaginations of their own corrupt hearts.

The Gentiles for many hundreds of years before our LORD came, did not believe nor obey GOD; for as St. Paul says in another place, “ they did not like to retain GOD in their knowledge,” they chose not to worship HIM, the true and living GOD, but, changing the truth of GOD into a lie, they likened His glory

to the image of corruptible man, and often even of brute beasts. It is plain from the Bible that the worship of false gods came in and prevailed to a great extent over the world not *very* long after the flood, in spite of the terrible severity of that great judgment which God had then executed upon the wickedness of man. Then the Gentiles, being led away to idols, did not believe God; but Abraham did believe, and became the father of the faithful. And the Israelites, or Jews (as they were afterwards called), who sprang from Abraham's family, continued to worship the true God.

This was the only nation that did cleave to their MAKER; all others forsook His worship and service: yet a promise was made to Abraham, that in due time "all the families of the earth should be blessed in his Seed¹."

Even the Israelites, however, did not walk in the steps of their fathers' faith. The licentious pleasures which the heathens joined to the worship they paid to their false gods, were more pleasing to most of the Israelites than the purer service of the true and living God. And thus they were so far from valuing as they ought the favour shown to them, that often they wished and sought "to be as the heathen, to serve wood and stone²." Great part of the Old Testament is filled with an account of the various methods of judgment and mercy by which God kept them (as it were, in spite of themselves) so far under subjection to HIM, that His worship was still preserved amongst them as the worship of the One Only God, till His SON came.

As the time drew on for the Coming of the promised SAVIOUR, the prophets continued to foretel more frequently and more distinctly that HE should be "a-light to the Gentiles³." That the LORD would at last "be sought of them that asked not for HIM, would be found of them that had not sought HIM; and would say, Behold ME, behold ME, unto a nation that was not called by His Name⁴."

At length GOD our SAVIOUR came, and the Jews added to all their former sins this last and greatest, that they rejected, hated, murdered HIM. After HE was gone from them, His disciples

¹ Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18.

² Ezek. xx. 32.

³ Is. xlix. 6.

⁴ Ibid. lxxv. 1.

received the same sort of treatment at their hands; the Jews contradicted CHRIST's message, they blasphemed His holy Name, they hated, ill-treated, and murdered His messengers.

And it is especially mentioned in the Acts, that on one or two occasions, when the Jews were not willing to receive the Gospel, St. Paul plainly told them, that it was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to them, as God's ancient people; but forasmuch as they rejected it, and counted themselves unworthy of everlasting life, he should turn to the Gentiles; that they would hear, and that thus the old prophecies of their own Scriptures would be fulfilled⁵.

Thus, even as St. Paul says in the text, the Gentiles, who in times past had not believed God, at length obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews.

The Jews, however, were not utterly to be cast off; they did not stumble that they should fall utterly⁶; for first, even in the time of the Apostles, there was a remnant of them, a small and blessed number, chosen according to the election of grace, who did not resist God's counsels, but were obedient unto His Gospel. When St. Paul came up to Jerusalem for the last time, St. James, the bishop, and the elders or clergy of that place, said unto him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe⁷." These were all partakers of the same mercy which was vouchsafed unto the Gentiles in CHRIST JESUS, in Whom Gentile and Jew are all One, and there is no difference.

But the great body of the Jews have continued even to this very time, for nearly two thousand years, disobedient and unbelieving; still the same mercy continues to be held out to them. And there appears to me reason to hope and believe that they will yet one day close with that mercy and obtain part of it; for they are (we are distinctly told in the text) to obtain mercy. And the effect of their unbelief, gross and inexcusable as it is, has been to magnify the mercy of God, which yet waits for them, and bears with them, and holds out to them the offers of the Gospel.

Thus, first, the early rebellion and idolatries of the Gentiles were a means of showing forth God's mercy towards them. For,

⁵ Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6; xxviii. 28.

⁶ Rom. xi. 11.

⁷ Acts xxi. 20. In the original *μυριάδες*, *tens of thousands*.

though because of their wilful blindness and foul idolatries, God gave them over awhile to follow their own imaginations, yet had HE at length mercy on them in CHRIST JESUS, and brought them back as stray sheep into his fold. And next, when the Jews disbelieved and rejected the Gospel, GOD'S mercy was the more magnified by spreading it among us Gentiles. And HE yet waiteth now for the Jews as HE did once for the Gentiles, until the time may come when HE shall show mercy on all, when all shall be brought to believe.

Meanwhile, the very continuance of His long-suffering, His continued offers of forgiveness and favour to them in His Gospel, magnify and glorify His mercy. HE hath shown all to be unbelieving in heart,—HE hath concluded all in unbelief, that HE may have mercy upon all.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out⁸!”

Amidst these unsearchable workings of God's wisdom and love towards man, even we, I believe, can discern one great object that seems always kept in view, one great work that is continually going on, namely, I mean that HE is for ever bringing good out of our evil. The order and course of His providence is, however, such, that some bitter fruits of the evil we do, some remembrances are still left, to make men see wherein they have sinned; but GOD is ever working for us ways of deliverance out of those evils, in which we have involved ourselves through our own sins.

Thus after the fall of man, though Adam and Eve were cast out of Paradise, and the ground cursed, yet was there the promise given of a Deliverer. And when the world was destroyed by a flood for its wickedness, provision was made for the continuance of our race in the family of one righteous man,—the blameless Noah.

And to proceed to that which has more to do with the matter now before us. When, after the flood, the nations of the world provoked God for their many sins and great perverseness, to give them over to idolatry and wickedness, Abraham was chosen,

⁸ Rom. xi. 33.

that out of all the evil that man was doing, should be brought this one good on GOD's part, that in one nation at any rate His worship should be strictly maintained, and His oracles continually preserved. When that nation proved rebellious, and refused to receive GOD's SON, then GOD brought it about that the other nations should be called in their place, and again brought nigh through CHRIST to the One true GOD.

What further dispensations may be yet to come, it is not for us to pretend to say; but we know that the end of the time of mercy will soon and suddenly come, and they who have abused GOD's mercy, or do abuse it now, by continuing in sin, store up wrath and judgment for themselves against that dreadful Day.

For as GOD deals with the whole race of man, even so does HE deal also with each single person amongst us. HE put us first into the way of salvation, like Adam in the garden of Eden, to be well nigh as happy as he was, had we stood stedfastly to our covenant. But if we have fallen away from baptismal grace, though we must ever bear marks of our changed condition, yet HE still takes occasion to show forth His mercy, by keeping us in the possibility of repentance, by vouchsafing to us earnest warnings and gracious offers of love.

And again, when one of us injures another, behaves with cruelty and unkindness, perhaps to one to whom he is especially bound to be kind, GOD is often pleased to make such cruelty and unkindness the means of blessing and sanctification to the person who suffers from them, thus bringing forth out of the sin and disobedience of the one, salvation to the other; and then again, by the sight of the forbearance of the first, moving that other to repentance.

Be assured there is no way to happiness like this, of endeavouring to think very often and earnestly of GOD's boundless mercy, praying and striving at the same time with all our hearts to live suitably to such thoughts. If we could but learn this, every thing would turn to our comfort and salvation; in every thing we saw, in every thing that befel us, we might discern proofs of love towards us, and of GOD's tender pity for us in our fallen and helpless state.

For this end, we must endeavour first of all to govern and guide our thoughts; we must learn not to let our minds dwell on trifling and useless things, such as we are too fond of thinking about, and we must labour with much pains (for it will

require labour and pains) to use ourselves to think rather of those serious, and important, and everlasting things upon which, as Christians, we ought to be continually meditating. And even here, even in this world of darkness, the sweet and blessed comfort which those have who are used to think of God's love and mercy is worth any pains.

In this world indeed, such comfort may be clouded or alloyed even in good men, though it cannot be taken away; but when the last Day shall come, and we shall see God as HE is, who can tell the blessedness and the unspeakable joy of those who have been used to think of God's mercy and love to them in this world, and have tried to walk worthy of it, when they shall know that His love rests upon them securely for ever, that they are sure of being always unutterably loved by HIM?

But how very unworthy are any words of man to express such thoughts as these.

In conclusion, let us ask ourselves one serious question. What must be the end of them who shall be found to have resisted to the last all God's long-suffering mercy and love? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation⁹?" In the book of Revelation it is foretold, that in that Day, "men shall in vain call on the mountains and hills to hide them from the face of HIM that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb¹."

God is yet revealed to us in mercy; but if we do not with all our hearts embrace that mercy, and submit ourselves to His will, seeking to be meet for salvation at the last, the time must come, when God shall appear unto us in justice and in wrath.

⁹ Heb. ii. 3.

¹ Rev. vi. 16.

S E R M O N C C V .

CHRIST PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE.

ST. LUKE ii. 22.

“ And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought HIM to Jerusalem, to present HIM to the LORD.”

THE time appointed by the law of Moses for a mother's purification was forty days after the birth, (or, what is the same thing, three and thirty after the circumcision,) as you may find in the twelfth chapter of the book of Leviticus. Therefore this, the fortieth day after Christmas, the thirty-third of the new year, has been for ages kept as a solemn festival in remembrance of the first coming of our LORD into His own temple at Jerusalem. For then, at the end of those days of her purification, did the righteous Joseph and His blessed Virgin Mother bring HIM thither to present HIM before the LORD.

This entrance of the LORD into His temple had been foretold by Malachi four hundred years before, as you heard in that passage out of His prophecies which has been read to you to-day from the altar, according to the appointment of the Church, instead of an epistle. “ The LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the MESSENGER of the covenant, Whom ye delight in : behold, HE shall come, saith the LORD of Hosts¹.”

But the LORD did not come then in glory, like as before when that bright cloud, the sign of His presence, filled the new-built

¹ Malachi iii. 1.

temple in the time of king Solomon; HE came now in our flesh, in the form of a helpless babe. For though it was still indeed and in truth the LORD of Hosts coming into His temple, but yet now to the fleshly eye what was to be seen? No visible glory, but two persons in mean condition and of poor estate, bringing what was supposed to be their first-born infant to present him according to the law. This had been commanded by GOD and observed by pious Jews ever since the first-born of the Israelites were preserved in Egypt, at the time when those of the Egyptians were destroyed. From that time forth the eldest child in every Israelitish family (if a male) was brought to GOD and solemnly presented before HIM, and a sum of money paid to the priest for his redemption in remembrance of this deliverance.

But this was done not so much to bring to mind these past mercies, as to foreshadow greater things, Gospel mysteries, of which not only these rites, but even their deliverance in Egypt was a type and shadow. For that which had been hitherto done only in type or shadow, began as on this very day to be done in substance and reality, when "the first-born of every creature²," GOD's only SON, was presented before His FATHER veiled in our flesh.

He was presented as one willing to offer HIMSELF up for us; HE came even as it had been foretold of HIM, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O GOD³." He was come into the world to do away with the sacrifices of the law, by offering up HIMSELF as the true and perfect sacrifice once for all on the cross. And His presentation, as on this day, in the temple was (as it were) a foreshowing, or rather a beginning, of that sacrifice which HE accomplished on the cross as on an altar, where HE presented HIMSELF before His FATHER as bearing our sins, and making a full satisfaction for them. And therefore Simeon, after he had taken the Holy CHILD to his arms, spake of His passion, and forewarned His blessed mother of her share in those sufferings, saying to her, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also⁴." This was fulfilled doubtless in many a trial of anxiety and distress, but the more especially when at the last she, with the other two Marys and St. John, stood by her dying SON and LORD.

But in that particular act which we have now in remembrance,

² Col. i. 15.

³ Ps. xl. 7, 8. Heb. x. 9.

⁴ Luke ii. 33.

she was permitted (by virtue of that special favour shewn to her above all others) to minister as in the solemn initiation or commencement of the great Offering. For she brought the SAVIOUR of all, and presented HIM before the LORD, like as Hannah before her, who, as a type or prophetic likeness of the Virgin, presented her first-born Samuel as the loan she, according to her vow, lent unto the LORD. For even thus did the Virgin give up her part in her Blessed SON, by presenting HIM this day before that FATHER who had vouchsafed to choose her to be the mother, after the flesh, of her SAVIOUR and her GOD.

And would that Christian parents would consider, when they bring their children here that they may be in baptism made partakers of Redemption and of the unspeakable gift of the HOLY GHOST, that they are most solemnly presenting them, giving them up to GOD, Who is now taking them to be His own children. For when we receive them again after they are baptized, we should not look on them as henceforth our own children merely, but rather as GOD'S children, whom HE is pleased to trust to us that we may bring them up in His "nurture and admonition." For thus even the Holy JESUS was, after this presentation in the temple, taken home by Joseph and His blessed mother to Nazareth, where HE was subject to them.

Yet to the blessed Virgin herself, it seems to have been a trial always to act up to this dedication she had made of HIM to GOD; for on one occasion, as we read in the second chapter of St. John's Gospel, she seems to have been in a manner reprov'd by HIM, as though she were tempted, by her deep interest in His honour, to take upon herself a right to control HIM in His ministry, calling upon HIM to work miracles before the time. For then HE said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." On another occasion, she joined His other relatives in seeking to draw HIM off from the continued labours of His ministry; and it was told our LORD, while HE was teaching, that His mother and His brethren were desiring to speak with HIM. And then she was again in a manner reprov'd, when HE said, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren⁵?" Yet at the last she endured to stand by the Cross and see the end.

But if it was so even with her, the mother of the Blessed

⁵ Matt. xii. 48.

SAVIOUR, doubtless we shall do well to be watchful over ourselves, lest we be tempted to look upon our children as given us for our own comfort or honour, rather than as having been from the very first given up and dedicated by us to GOD. For by our dedication of them at the time of their baptism, we not only acknowledged His right in them as the first right; but more than this, we actually give up to HIM our part in them, receiving them henceforth not as our own children, but as His committed to our trust, as loans lent us of the LORD; so that after this, if in our age, or sickness, or need, they comfort or succour us, we should regard them as so doing, not as our children only, but as ministers of mercy employed by their true and heavenly FATHER.

But if the right of parents to their children is in a manner given up to GOD when they are baptized, how much more is our right to please or serve ourselves taken away by our baptismal dedication to HIM? For though Christian children have now a heavenly FATHER, yet, if they be His true children, they will, for His sake, be far more willing, more scrupulously desirous, to serve their earthly parents, to please them and to seek their good. But our *own* pleasure, our *own* profit, our service to *ourselves*, we utterly renounced when we were presented to GOD through CHRIST in baptism. For we cannot serve and please ourselves and be true Christians. Our LORD HIMSELF has said, "If any man will come after ME, let him deny himself⁶."

It is a very reasonable ground of comfort and encouragement to us, to think that we were baptized in infancy, before we had any wilful sin or deceit about us that could prevent us from receiving the gift of GOD's good SPIRIT, and so hinder us from being presented unto HIM with pure and clean hearts, hearts purified by that SPIRIT with which we were baptized.

But yet what profit is it thus to have been once offered up as a pure and acceptable offering before GOD, and thus to have partaken of that unspeakable gift, if then we have ruined all, have turned away from GOD, have disobeyed HIM, forgotten HIM again and again, defiled our hearts and bodies all over with sin and impurity? And what if perhaps even now we know our hearts must be still impure and defiled, because they are so apt

⁶ Matt. xvi. 24.

to find pleasure in bad thoughts, thoughts of ill will, or pride, or impurity ?

It would be very wrong, it would (as it seems to me) be deceitful and wicked in me, as your minister, to deny, that in this case great is your guilt, horrible the punishments that must ensue, without deep, earnest, and continued repentance. But yet for them that do repent, there is surely hope in GOD'S mercy—His unwearied mercy—in that Fountain that has been opened to wash away sin and uncleanness, and in the almighty power and long patience of the HOLY GHOST the Sanctifier, striving in sinful hearts.

We were presented to GOD once, and that pure and clean, after our Baptism. And now when we have sinned, as we all sin, we are permitted to present ourselves before HIM with confession and prayers, either at home or here at His own sacred house ; and here, whenever you are but willing to come here, after your confession you hear from GOD'S messenger the comfortable assurance that "HE pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel;" and then we return to prayer, not without a hope that we are presenting ourselves with hearts and consciences in measure, at least, cleansed from the defilements of our sins. And surely in the Gospel for to-day the thoughtful Christian may find the strongest reasons for being very frequent in presenting himself before GOD here. For who were they to whom the LORD and SAVIOUR of the world was revealed when HE first came to the Temple ? Who were the persons who were of GOD counted worthy so great a favour ?

Besides the holy Simeon, one other only is mentioned—Anna the Prophetess ; and of her it is expressly said, that she departed not from the Temple, serving GOD with prayers and fastings night and day. She had lived such a life as this, it appears probable, many years, but now at the last her persevering devotion was rewarded with the sight of HIM Who was the desire and the glory of Israel ; and it was in the Temple, too, that Simeon found the LORD'S CHRIST, according to GOD'S gracious promise to him.

And somewhat in like manner we come here to present ourselves before the LORD with confession, prayers, and praise ; and thus, if we persevere in constant devout waiting upon GOD, we may trust we shall, like them, find CHRIST here, and obtain

of HIM the gifts of holiness, and in union with HIM be presented acceptable and pure before GOD. For when we come hither to pray for the pardon of our sins, and the cleansing of our whole man from our wretched defilements, we do in a manner, by our very appearance, if we bring our hearts with us, present and plead before the FATHER the merits of CHRIST's sacrifice.

Thus the Blessed Virgin, when, as on this day, she came for purification, presented before GOD not only the two turtle-doves required by the law, but that true Lamb, Who was afterwards on the Cross to bear the sins of the whole world.

But with regard to us, it is when we come here to celebrate the LORD's Supper, that we most solemnly set before GOD the sacrifice of our LORD. When we offer the bread and wine upon GOD's altar, we make remembrance of CHRIST offering HIMSELF upon the Cross; and while we pray GOD to accept these our oblations, we plead the merits of that one great Sacrifice for ourselves and for the whole Church.

And then we do, each time we receive the LORD's Supper, solemnly renew that dedication of ourselves which was first made in our Baptism, presenting ourselves, our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice to HIM. For like as CHRIST offered HIMSELF, soul and body, an entire sacrifice for us on the Cross, so do we, in the service of the Holy Communion, making remembrance hereof by our oblation of bread and wine, offer and present ourselves a whole offering unto GOD's service.

To come to GOD's altar without meaning to give up ourselves to obey and love HIM, must be hypocritical and wicked. But if we would but really so bend our whole hearts to HIM, so entirely cast off the world, ourselves, and every thing that may draw us away from HIM, as to give up ourselves to GOD in deed, and not in word only, calling to mind our baptismal profession, then we should be sure to find CHRIST here—to find HIM in the fulness of blessing. Then would our prayers be heard, and we should obtain that most blessed and perfect of all purifications, when the sinner, upon true repentance, has his body made clean by CHRIST's glorious Body, and his soul washed in CHRIST's most precious Blood.

Let it be, therefore, our endeavour to present ourselves at that Holy Table, each time more and more, as we would present

ourselves before His presence on His throne of judgment at the last day.

For remember well, that though you may refuse now to come near CHRIST spiritually present in this Sacrament, in order that you may continue in worldliness, carelessness, or sin,—at the last day there will be no choice; you must stand before HIM Whom on earth you have refused.

Or again, if any of you dishonour CHRIST by approaching HIM here hypocritically, while you do not mean to serve HIM,—you may deceive others, you may deceive yourselves here; but at the last it must be known who have really presented themselves to the LORD, as determined to forsake sin, and give themselves up to obey HIM from the heart. On that day some shall claim His mercy, on the ground that they have eaten and drunk in His presence, unto whom HE shall say, “I know you not whence ye are: depart from ME, all ye workers of iniquity.” So vain is every confidence, unless we put away from us the sin that we are most inclined to harbour in our hearts, and unless we are resolved to perform those duties for conscience sake to which we are by nature most disinclined.

There are, we have reason to hope, a blessed few—God grant we may be of the number!—who do heartily present themselves to their GOD in the offices of religion, especially in the service of the altar, and being thus knit unto HIM, strive to abide in HIM by keeping His commandments, and bringing forth the fruits of holiness in their common daily life.

For those who so live, who so abide in HIM, for His own elect, He is continually pleading on high; their prayers, their endeavours, their imperfect works, their very bodies and souls HE presents continually before His FATHER, sprinkled and cleansed with His blood. They know not, it may be, their blessedness; they are full of grief and humiliation for their sins, for the imperfection of their services; but at length they will know they are accepted. When once death is past, they will find themselves safe, brought near to CHRIST in Paradise, secure that at His great day HE will present them blameless before His own glory in exceeding joy.

Fit us, O LORD, for that day! fit us to be presented before Thy judgment seat!

SERMON CCVI.

LOWLY-MINDED PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.

ST. MARK vii. 28, 29.

“ And she answered and said unto HIM, Yes, LORD: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.

“ And HE said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.”

IN the Gospel for last Sunday¹ you heard how our SAVIOUR resisted the devil’s assaults upon HIMSELF. To-day the Church teaches us how HE delivers others from the power of Satan, even those whom that cruel enemy holds in miserable bondage; how HE delivers them at the voice of earnest, humble, and unwearied prayer.

We find this history of the Canaanitish woman in the Gospels both of St. Matthew and St. Mark.

St. Mark says, upon His coming into the borders of these great heathen cities, Tyre and Sidon, “ HE entered into an house, and would have no man know that HE was there, but HE could not be hid².”

When HE had sent out His disciples to preach and heal, HE had said to them, “ Go not into the way of the Gentiles, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel³.” And, accordingly, though HE does HIMSELF now enter within the borders of the heathen cities, yet it was not as manifesting HIMSELF, or going about doing good, but rather in the manner of one retiring for meditation and prayer.

¹ The First Sunday in Lent, this sermon being preached on the second.

² Mark vii. 24.

³ Matt. x. 5, 6.

Yet, even here, we find HE would not reject humble and persevering prayer, no, not although it came from one of a race which had been once accursed of GOD. Thus did HE even now begin to shew that "HE⁴ is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth GOD and worketh righteousness is accepted with HIM."

HE had just been teaching the Jews that the distinction between clean and unclean meats was no longer to be regarded, as you will see, if you look to the place in either of the Gospels of St. Matthew or St. Mark; and now HE was beginning to prepare them for that other great truth, which they proved so unwilling to receive, that all the Gentiles, even the Canaanites, were to be fellow-heirs with them of GOD's promises, and that there was to be no difference.

But some one may feel disposed to ask how it was that this woman, who was so earnest in her desire to find relief for her daughter, and had so strong a faith, that from our SAVIOUR she could obtain it, did not come into Judæa or Galilee to seek it; for those countries were not far from her own. It is most likely that the same lowliness of mind which led her to take it with all submission, when she heard her nation called dogs, made her backward, through fear and shame, to go after our SAVIOUR into His own more favoured country. She ventured not to seek the children's bread, but only begged for the crumbs that fell from their table.

In all likelihood, she knew that her race were under a curse—for even from the time when Noah and his sons came out of the ark it was said, "Cursed be Canaan⁵!" and, conformably to this, we read in the Book of the Apocrypha called Wisdom, "It was a cursed seed from the beginning⁶." And this accursed race after that time defiled themselves, not only with the most abominable idolatries, but with all the most horrible and unnatural crimes. There was nothing hateful to GOD, and to all good men, of which they were not guilty. They burnt their own children in the fire as sacrifices to false gods; there was no kind of abominable uncleanness with which they did not pollute themselves; and, on that account, GOD commanded Joshua and the children of Israel,

⁴ Acts x. 34, 35.

⁵ Gen. ix. 25.

⁶ Wisd. xii. 11.

when they came into their country, to make no peace with them, neither to spare any of them, but utterly to destroy them, lest God's chosen people should be corrupted by their evil examples.

Here, then, we see the power of that grace which CHRIST brought with HIM unto all nations of the world, revoking and abolishing every curse, in behalf of those who would but believe on HIM, in whom "all the families of the earth are blessed."

For these Canaanites, who had been not only cast out, but in most cases destroyed, lest they should pervert the Jews, now appear better than the Jews. Here, at least, we see that when the Jews were persecuting CHRIST, driving HIM out when HE was coming unto them, and was going about among them to do them good, a Canaanitish woman comes after HIM, and seeks His gracious help with earnest and humble prayer.

And having come unto HIM, she continued to cry after HIM, "Have mercy on me, O LORD, thou Son of David," until her continual and earnest cries drew on her the attention of His disciples. And indeed it must have been a piteous sight to see a woman in such affliction, a mother entreating in behalf of her daughter—of her daughter suffering from so shocking a calamity.

For these possessed persons were afflicted with dreadful madness, so that we read of some who were so fierce that men did not dare to pass by that way, and that no man could bind them, no, not with chains, who were continually crying out and cutting themselves with stones⁷; of another, who had often cast himself into the fire, often into the water⁸; and plainly this case was a grievous one, indeed she said, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." And the afflicted mother did not venture to bring before our LORD her poor child, who was in all likelihood in too shocking a condition to take abroad, but left her at home, and came herself alone to make entreaty for her, and now she merely cries for mercy, and sets forth her affliction, and adds no more. She does not venture to set forth one plea, one claim. She does not ask HIM to come to her house; she does not say, like Jairus for his daughter, "Come, and lay thy hand upon her⁹;" nor like that nobleman St. John mentions, "Come down ere my child die¹." And she does not say, "Have mercy on my child," but

⁷ Mark v. 3.

⁸ Matt. xvii. 15.

⁹ Matt. ix. 18.

¹ John iv. 49.

“Have mercy on me.” For the daughter had less sense of her calamity, or, it may be, none at all: it was the poor mother that was the great sufferer, and she most earnestly entreats compassion of our gracious LORD.

But “He answered her not a word.” How wonderful are His ways! they are above our ways. To the Jews he continues to use persuasion and kindness when most wilfully blind of heart. HE entreats them when they blaspheme, and does not forsake them, even when they tempt HIM; but to this woman HE does not vouchsafe an answer, though she was displaying such faith, such awe of His greatness and power; and this, not having had the same privilege as the Jews, of instruction from her childhood in the knowledge of the true and living God.

Who is there who would not have been offended, that is, made to turn away from CHRIST, by such a refusal? For her prayers had been most humble and faithful; she had pleaded no worthiness, she had made no claim; she had only made known her affliction and entreaty, and yet she received no answer.

Perhaps some of those that stood by were for the time offended, —I mean, their faith in CHRIST may have been shaken, but she was not offended.

Even the very disciples may have been astonished, though they were Jews and accustomed to consider the Canaanites accursed; at least they seemed to have interceded gently for her, that she might have a favourable answer, “for his disciples came and besought HIM, saying, Send her away; let her depart, for she crieth after us.” Her cries had moved their compassion—yet they do not venture directly to ask that HE should grant her entreaty. Neither does HE grant it, but answers, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Whence we may learn not to trust overmuch to the prayers of others for us, but to continue ever to entreat the LORD ourselves with all earnestness for mercy in spite of all discouragements, and however unworthy we may know ourselves to be.

For what did this woman, when she heard at last His long silence broken only by what seemed a rejection of her entreaty? Did she cease to pray? Did she withdraw from His presence? Was she less earnest? Far from it, she increased her importunity.

How different, alas! from ourselves, who, if we receive not at once strength to overcome any temptation that assails us, leave off both prayers and struggle, when we ought to strive and to pray the more earnestly, the more we find it is only in God's strength we can overcome.

And consider the example of faith we have set us here. If His silence was disheartening before, much more His answer now. The persons on whom she could most rely to speak for her were rejected, and mercy to her declared to be out of the present purpose of His mission.

Yet she, seeing them rejected, ventured to pray the more earnestly for herself; before, she only cried after HIM, not daring to come before HIM—but now the conviction that in HIM was her only hope of succour, and that HE was yet, of a truth, a compassionate and merciful, as well as a most mighty SAVIOUR, made her approach HIM with a holy confidence; “She came and worshipped HIM, saying, LORD, help me.” Though apostles were rejected entreating in her behalf, still “she cries unto HIM” because HE alone could save her. And though she had heard them say HE was not sent to those of her race, yet she repeats her entreaty, as confident HE could help whom HE would: she did not say, “Pray for me,” or, “Entreat for me,” but “Help me,” as believing the help was in HIMSELF to bestow.

But our LORD was pleased to try her yet further and more sharply; “HE answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs.”

Thus when HE did answer her, His words to her were at first more discouraging than His silence. HE calls the Jews now not sheep only, but children, and her nation *dogs*. He no longer refers to the will of another, “I am not sent,” but withholds what she asks, as though it were not in His own judgment meet that it should be granted.

But the woman, so far from being disheartened, makes for herself a fresh plea from those very words of His. “Yes, LORD: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs;” or, as St. Matthew says, “of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”

She acknowledges herself a dog, and the Jews children, nay, masters; but on this very ground she claims to partake a little of the blessed privileges of His presence and healing, so fully

enjoyed, though so little valued, by those whom she is not reluctant to call children, nay, even masters.

As though she had said, "Though I be a dog, yet, as a dog, I may eat of the crumbs that fall from the table, that are not missed by the children—these, surely, even the dogs may humbly claim as their natural portion.

And now we may see, partly, why it was our LORD continued so long to refuse her. HE knew she would say this; and it was His gracious will to give her occasion to exercise and show forth this faith and humility.

Else if it had been His purpose from the first to deny her, HE would have refused her still, for HE was not a mere man that HE should repent and change His mind. So that it was not in sternness HE kept silence, neither was it reproachfully that HE said what HE did say, but in order to unfold the concealed treasure of her humility and faith; and also that we might draw from her history a full assurance that, however severe and repeated the discouragements we may meet with in prayer, and in our endeavours after holiness, we have but to persevere in faith with humility, and we shall obtain in the end an abundance of blessings, the more ample the longer our faith is tried. I mean, if we will continue importunate, continue to pray and strive without ceasing, the longer the Gift is kept back from us, the more fully and graciously will it be given to us at last.

For what does our LORD say to her in the end? "O woman, great is thy faith." How comfortable to her to hear at last those Lips speak praise and encouragement. But how had her great faith been shewn? By this humble answer. So that, as St. Mark teaches us, our LORD expressly said "*For this saying* go thy way. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt: and her daughter was made whole from that very hour." His word was no sooner spoken than it wrought the cure,—for this was the same LORD Who said at the first, "Let there be light, and there was light," and His word has still, and shall have for ever and ever the same Almighty power. HE speaks, and it is done, and HE commands and it stands fast².

And it is ever in answer to humble persevering prayers, and in reward of such a course of life as is suitable thereto, that HE

² See Ps. xxxiii. 9.

speaks that Almighty word in mercy, to the saving, and healing, and blessing of soul and body. When they who have long prayed and laboured on earth, with all humility and perseverance amidst discouragements and great tribulation, shall at last be brought before His Throne, and when HE shall say at last to each of these, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD³." Then at that self-same hour as we hear that most joyful Voice, shall all sin and sorrow be taken away from them for ever, and the devil shall be even driven away from them; the gates of heaven shall open, the Face of the Blessed One shall shine upon them. They shall be like HIM then at once, and see HIM as HE is.

Yes, that most blessed Voice we shall hear, those joys beyond thought we shall partake, if only we will now persevere in humble prayer and service to our GOD.

While we remain here, that wicked and cruel enemy will still assail us with his pernicious suggestions, with the evil thoughts wherewith he is for ever trying to assault and hurt our souls. And our only safety is to keep in our minds that deep conviction which moved this woman, of whom we have heard, to this most blessed importunity; the conviction, I mean, that we cannot help ourselves, that our only hope of deliverance from that fearful enemy is to be even like her, worshipping and entreating our only SAVIOUR, saying unto HIM, "LORD, help me."

But alas! what hope have *we* of victory, if victory cannot be obtained, cannot be looked for, without earnest importunate prayer?

Can *they* be in the safe way, can *they* be of the right mind, who think that if they say one short, perhaps hurried prayer in the morning and another at night, and go to church one day in the week, and that, perhaps, only once, this is religion enough, prayer enough? Is this all that was meant to be taught by this history? or by our LORD's parables of the importunate widow, who by her continual coming, moved even the judge that feared not GOD, neither regarded man; or of him that, late at night, by continual entreaties roused up from his bed his friend that at first denied him, and prevailed upon him to supply all his wants? I ask you, when you read or hear those parables, and such

³ Matt. xxv. 21

examples as that of this woman, when you hear of commands to pray without ceasing, can you think that all that is meant is, that you are not altogether to neglect prayer, that you are to pray now and then? Is it not the plain meaning of Scripture that our prayers should be incessant? that, as far as may be consistent with the necessities of our present state, we should be praying always? This is surely the plain and obvious meaning of these passages of Holy Scripture; and it is the meaning that has ever been put upon them by the Church of CHRIST. And if we did but consider how great and pressing the danger that hangs over us, how very dreadful the condemnation into which we may, nay, we must fall unless God help us, could we be backward to pray earnestly and without ceasing for mercy—for help? The time will soon be when prayers will be in vain, like the prayers of Esau after he had sold his birthright, and found no place for repentance, though he sought it earnestly with tears. His loud and bitter cry was put up too late, and therefore was in vain. If we did but think that the time will be here soon, when it will be too late to cry for mercy, but that now our cry, if unwearied, would be sure to be heard,—could we fail to pray earnestly, heartily, with perseverance? And if you believe, moreover, that HE has given a particular promise, that “when two or three are gathered together in His name, HE will grant their requests,” cannot you be oftener here, where you are surest your prayers will be heard? And when you are here, will you not try to pray with all your heart and soul? For else your prayers cannot be received; and let the posture of your body be such as becomes those entreating for mercy. This woman knelt and worshipped when she said, “LORD, help me.” Our blessed LORD HIMSELF knelt at His prayers.

Who is there of us who, if he had been justly condemned to die, and went before a king or a judge to beg his life, would not kneel down? Why, then, are you so cold? Are you less desirous of God’s pardon? or do you think that HE, that can destroy both soul and body in hell, is less to be feared than those who can but kill the body, and afterwards have no more that they can do?

There can hardly be a much worse sign of the religious state of any generation than this that belongs to us, that we have so many of us left off even to kneel when we profess to be praying to ALMIGHTY GOD.

S E R M O N C C V I I .

THE SIN OF SHECHEM AND DINAH, AND ITS FRUITS.

GENESIS xlix. 5—7.

“ Simeon and Levi are brethren ; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united : for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel.”

JACOB on his dying bed declared in these words how greatly he disapproved the bloody and treacherous act of revenge his sons Simeon and Levi executed upon Shalem, the city of Shechem, of which you heard in the lesson this evening. And the mark of God's displeasure against this cruel deed of theirs he prophesied would rest upon their children, even after they had entered into the good land God promised them. For HE added, “ I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” And, therefore, when Jacob's children took possession of the land of Canaan, the tribes descended from each of these two sons had not their land in one place, like almost all the other tribes, but were scattered over different parts of the Holy Land.

And from this history we may learn in many ways the evil and very dreadful consequences of giving reins to our angry passions and wild desires. And it is most needful for us to consider this : for these passions and desires have great power over us ; so great that we cannot depend on anything else to restrain them but the

principles of true practical religion, made to sink down into our hearts by the Grace of God.

Last Sunday afternoon, I endeavoured to set before you the blessedness of those who, like Abraham, do so love God above all things, that there is nothing, however dear to them, that they would not give up to secure His favour. Surely they make a wise choice, who are thus willing to lose the whole world and gain their own souls.

Now let us consider the misery of them that do otherwise, that set aside the love of God, and the hope of His rewards, that they may gratify any desire of their own.

Of this number was Esau, who coming in the night, hungry and faint from his hunting, sold for the morsel of meat for which he longed, his claim as Isaac's eldest son, to the first share of those good things which God had promised to his grandfather, this very Abraham, who, sooner than lose it, was willing to give up his most dear son. Afterwards indeed, when it was too late, Esau deeply regretted his folly, and cried, it is said, with an exceeding loud and bitter cry; but "he could find no place of repentance, though he sought it thus carefully with tears." Thus he became to us a type or picture of those amongst ourselves, who at the last day shall wail and gnash their teeth in vain, when they find they have lost their heavenly birthright for the sake of earthly pleasure or earthly gain, and see themselves for ever cast out of the kingdom of God. Such are the dreadful consequences of indulging our desires, of following our own appetites, rather than the holy commandments of God.

And even in this world, what misery, what shame, what remorse, what quarrellings, does our want of self-restraint occasion? Yea, even malice, and bloodshed, and murder, come of these unrestrained desires and passions.

We might learn this if we would from that remarkable history concerning Dinah and Shechem, which the Church has set before us this afternoon¹.

For what was the cause of all this bloodshed? Was it not this? That Shechem would not wait till he could gain Dinah in marriage; but giving reins to his wicked and ungoverned lust, first dealt with her as a harlot, whom he intended afterwards to

¹ The Second Sunday in Lent.

make his wife. Not that he was as bad as too many are; he did not forsake her when he had dishonoured her. For it is said after this, that "his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. And he said to his father, Get me this damsel to wife." He was willing to make her all the reparation and satisfaction in his power; but yet the sacred history plainly shows us that God was much displeased with the act that he had done. For it brought utter destruction, not upon himself and his own family only, but upon the whole place where he dwelt. And Dinah too, who was the partner of his sin, she must have brought bitter sorrow and remorse upon herself for her folly and wickedness. And it is very likely that, because of this sin, she had no share of the blessings of Abraham. Her brothers had all numerous children, and grandchildren, and an offspring in a few generations of many thousands; but as to her, if she had ever any children at all, they were not numbered among the chosen seed, for of her race or descendants we hear nothing.

And mark the beginning of her sin: Dinah, it is said, went out to see the daughters of the land, that is to say, the Canaanitish women of the country, who were worshippers of false gods; and like persons without God in the world, lived an easy and worldly life. See the evil and bitter consequences, when young women, who have been themselves brought up in better principles, seek such companions as these. It is a most unlikely thing that she did this with her father Jacob's consent; for as he ever served God faithfully himself, and avoided any close connexion with these wicked and idolatrous Canaanites, we may be sure he would desire his children also to walk in the same steps. And a daughter, especially a young unmarried daughter, every wise and good father would desire to keep out of the company who would teach her harm rather than good.

Here therefore we see another proof of a truth, which every day's experience confirms to us, that disobedience to parents, neglect of their cautions, is sure to bring young persons to misery and ruin. Rebecca, the mother of Jacob and grandmother of Dinah, had said (as you heard in the lesson for this morning), "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, which are of

the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" Yet these daughters of the land Dinah went out to see, against the wishes of her parents, and to choose herself companions amongst a race given up to the worship of false gods, and to an ungodly course of life. The end was her ruin, the destruction of Shalem, and the guilt of a treacherous and bloody vengeance resting upon two of her brothers. All this sprang from this first error, that she would follow her own desire for pleasure and company, rather than keep at home and continue with her parents. When we once begin to do what we wish, rather than what we know to be right, none can tell what a mass of sin and evil springs from it. What St. James says of the tongue, may be applied to other sins also: "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth²." One act of foolish wilfulness may not only bring sin and misery on ourselves, but in its consequences upon many others too.

After this, when Shechem, the prince of the country, sought her to tempt her into sin, she had, as might have been expected, little firmness to resist. And where it is said that he "spake kindly to the damsel," it is put at the side of the larger Bibles, that it is in the Hebrew (the language in which it was first written), that "he spake to the heart of the damsel;" which has been considered to signify, that she still continued to listen with favour to him: he doubtless promised her marriage, and he fulfilled his promise, but this did not make her sin the less. She could be in no respect less to blame for that, than she would have been had he afterwards deserted her. In him, indeed, it was some sign that he was not lost to all good principle, that he was willing to make her reparation by marrying her: but this did not lessen in the least degree the guilt of *her* uncleanness; nor did it turn away God's displeasure even from him.

As Shechem and Dinah had given way to ungoverned lust, so did two of her brothers to ungoverned anger. All of them felt keenly the disgrace; indeed, it would have been a shocking thing if they had not; it is said, "The men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done."

There are many, alas! now, in these days, who think such a

² James iii. 5.

thing little or no disgrace, when people are to be married afterwards, as Shechem and Dinah were ; but it was not so then ; her family felt they were disgraced, and not without reason : for, as it is expressly said at the end of the verse I have just repeated, “ Such a thing ought not to be done.” God taught even them that thus to forestall marriage was a foul sin and disgrace ; and yet we hardly think it so, we who live in the very purest and fullest light of God’s blessed Gospel : and shall these things go unpunished ? It is fearful to think how much God’s displeasure may be day by day, and year by year, provoked against us of this country, for the great dishonour we thus do to the sacred mystery of marriage ; and this, though the Church so plainly teaches us in the Prayer Book, and in the other lessons she has read to us out of the Bible, things so great and high concerning marriage, things surpassing man’s understanding. For is not marriage greatly and grievously profaned, when a man deals with her as a harlot whom he means to have as his wife ? or when she who means to be a wife, first begins by making herself a harlot ?

The sons of Jacob had cause to be grieved, but they had more cause for grief than for anger : for their sister was more to be blamed than he ; first, in having idly left her father ; secondly, in listening to a seducer. But they felt rather the disgrace before men than the sin in the sight of God ; “ they were very angry.” And unrestrained anger never yet mended any evil. “ The wrath of man,” says St. James, “ worketh not the righteousness of God².”

Simeon and Levi formed a plan for executing a terrible vengeance upon Shechem and all belonging to him, for the disgrace they had sustained. And, blinded by their passion, they did not perceive they were disgracing themselves more by their treachery and cruelty, than they had been disgraced already by their sister’s dishonour. They held out treacherous offers of friendship to the unsuspecting family of Shechem, and polluted the solemn rite of circumcision, by which they themselves had been brought into covenant with God, by making it an instrument for their cowardly schemes and cruel purposes.

“ The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father

² James 1. 20.

deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister :” —and see how it was the remembrance of their dishonour that made them so wrathful—they said unto them, “ In this will we consent unto you : if ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised ; then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.”

You see how their anger had blinded them. They did not perceive how they were disgracing themselves by such treachery and falsehood, and causing that no man would hereafter believe them. Shechem’s fellow-citizens suspected nothing, but they hearkened to his earnest persuasions, for he, it seems, was greatly respected amongst them ; “ he was more honourable,” it is said, “ than all the house of his father.” Then, on the third day, when they could not defend themselves, Simeon and Levi, two of Dinah’s brothers, entered the city, sword in hand, and slew them all, including Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoiled the city, and took possession of their wives and their children, their flocks and their herds.

To this cruel, cowardly, and treacherous act, their father was no party ; this he witnessed of himself on his dying bed. For when he had spoken of “ the instruments of cruelty that were in their habitation,” he added, “ O my soul, come not thou into their secret ;” meaning to say, God forbid he should have ever been a partaker in this their wicked plot.

He reproved them, moreover, afterwards for what they had done. He said, “ Ye have troubled me, and made me to stink among the inhabitants of the land,” *i. e.* you have brought me to foul disgrace and dishonour amongst them. They will distrust us, and hate us : “ And I, being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.”

And observe moreover their answer ; for it shows how deeply-rooted in their hearts was the sense of the dishonour done to them.

And they said, “ Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot ?” they meant, because he had not waited for marriage, but had dishonoured her first ; and this they felt a foul disgrace, although he offered, and not only offered, but earnestly sought marriage afterwards.

And so far were they right; that it was a foul disgrace in the sight of God and man to their sister and to her family, as well as to him who had done the wrong: but it was a disgrace and sin to be washed out by the penitential tears of those that had sinned, and to be effaced by their amendment; not to be aggravated and increased as it was by unrestrained wrath, hurrying them on to the crimes of treacherous murder and spoil.

And, like people do when carried away with anger, they had made no distinction between the guilty and the innocent; but not only Shechem, but his father and his innocent fellow-countrymen were all destroyed by the same act of bloody vengeance.

Thus did they begin to be cruel to strangers, and they ended in being treacherous and cruel, as we shall see next Sunday, to their brother and aged father, whose grey hairs they well nigh brought down with sorrow to the grave.

Now if you desire to be the better for what you have heard to day, do you this evening read over attentively this chapter that I have been explaining, the 34th of Genesis, the first lesson appointed for this evening's service; if you cannot read yourself, see if you cannot get some kind fellow-Christian to read it to you.

And as you read it, or hear it, try and think of what I have told you, especially of the necessity of keeping a constant check and restraint upon yourself. Such thoughts, profitable as they are at all times, are peculiarly suitable for this present season of Lent. For one great purpose of fasting is to weaken our passions of every kind, that our flesh may be subdued to the spirit, and so we may be better able to govern and restrain ourselves.

Besides which, now at this season of penitence, even more than at all other times, should we search into our past lives, and our present practice, and see whether at any time we have been led either by unmortified desire of any kind, or by unrestrained anger, to do, and say, and think things offensive to our Holy God. I mention both our past lives and present practice, in order that we may not too readily think that past sins are things gone by; not only are they noted in God's book, but the evil consequences of past transgressions often cleave to our hearts, and poison them long after their commission—passions once indulged gain strength, and so much life, that it seems

almost impossible to deaden them; and we are apt to think far less of an approach to a sin, when we have once been guilty of it.

Therefore it is necessary, while we humble ourselves for the sins of our past lives, we should look carefully into our present practice, and see whether they do not still cleave to us in some form or other.

For instance, one who has been guilty of swearing, even if he has quite left off that evil habit, must see whether he may be always watchful over the language he uses, that it be not hasty and ill considered; and still more must those who have ever defiled themselves in any way with sins of impurity, look well to see whether they have made the thoughts and imaginations of the heart clean also. For GOD we know looks at the heart. Is our heart in such a state that HE can look upon us with favour?

Would you say you hope HE may for CHRIST's sake? Then if your hope be in CHRIST, CHRIST ought to be in your hearts. For unless JESUS CHRIST be in us, we are reprobates³. And consider how pure and meek your heart must be, if the LORD of all meekness and purity is to make it His dwelling.

These two passions above all let us make it our great labour and prayer to subdue and keep in subjection, anger and lust. These are the things that lead captive corrupt man till he is renewed by GOD'S SPIRIT. For in our corrupted nature they are stronger than reason.

One great aim of our LORD's teaching was to pluck these out of our hearts from the very roots, to guard us against all approach to them; therefore HE declared causeless and immoderate anger was an approach to the guilt of murder, a lustful look was as adultery.

May HE, our Heavenly Teacher, by the mighty help of His own SPIRIT, enable us to live according to His teaching, to make clean and meek what is within, to put off from us impurity and wrath, that our hearts may be fit for His indwelling, and that HE may live and rule there, schooling us in all purity and meekness, after His own blessed image.

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

So may we hope, hereafter, to be made more perfectly like HIM, when we are to see HIM as HE is. We cannot see HIM now—bad passions and wild desires more or less blind our hearts; the more pure and the more meek we learn to be, the more shall we be able to see our God.

May HE, therefore, ever preserve us from being engaged in the wild and angry quarrels, the sinful and greedy contentions of this wretched world; may HE deaden the lusts that war in our members, the fruitful sources of all this strife, so that we may ever serve HIM in peace and purity; may we learn to behold HIM always here by faith and love; and becoming daily more and more like HIM, may we be made at last by His Grace fit to dwell with HIM for ever in those blessed mansions of everlasting peace and purity, where no strife may ever enter, nor any thing that can defile.

S E R M O N C C V I I I .

OUR LORD'S FORBEARANCE AND CONSIDERATENESS TOWARDS
ALL IN HIS LAST DAYS IN THE FLESH.
FIRST, TOWARDS JERUSALEM AND ITS INHABITANTS.

PREACHED ON THE SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER.

JOHN xiii. 1.

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when JESUS knew that His hour was come that HE should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, HE loved them unto the end.”

THE week, upon which we enter to-day, is a very solemn season, and has subjects peculiarly suited to it which ought to be had in very serious remembrance. For, indeed, the work of the LORD was very great, very wonderful, very awful, and should be “sought out of all them that have pleasure therein¹.” And surely, no Christian who believes that he himself is a person interested in the Cross and Passion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST—interested even to the saving of his soul from eternal ruin, and to the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven—no Christian who believes that it cost more to redeem his soul from the power of hell than he for himself, or any other of the sons of man for him, could have ever satisfied, who fears the pains of hell, and hopes for the bliss of heaven, but must feel that now, at this season above all others, all things that our Blessed LORD and SAVIOUR took upon HIM to deliver man, ought to be had in very serious and thankful remembrance. For *now* is the very season of their accomplishment. Now the Church carefully sets them all forth before us

¹ Ps. cxi. 2.

in course and order. She invites us by the length of her services, and the solemnity of the things related in them, to "enter into our chambers," to retire into our own hearts, to bewail our sins, and bring them to the foot of the Cross—to "shut our doors about us;" that is, to shut out ordinary worldly distractions as much as may be, and to hide ourselves as it were for a little moment²."

For this has ever been accounted a very sacred season. Hence its name of the Great Week, or Holy Week, because of the great things at this time wrought for us. Therefore it was an ancient custom that at this time men should break off, as much as they could, from the ordinary business of their callings, and give more time to prayer and sacred contemplation, and sorrowful recollection of their sins, and to holy services. It is of this season that the holy Bishop, whose prayer we always use at the end of the Morning and Evening Services, says, "As the Jews went forth to meet CHRIST, when HE had raised Lazarus from the dead, so now not one city, but all the world go forth to meet HIM, not with palm-branches in their hands, but with alms-deeds, humanity, virtue, fasting, tears, prayers, watchings, and all kinds of piety, which they offer to CHRIST their LORD."

And whoever will turn his thoughts carefully towards the events of this holy week, and give himself more on these days to spiritual exercises, will find more and more for his mind to dwell upon. Much there will be too high and deep for him to penetrate; much to bewilder and amaze; for the mystery is unfathomable—the mystery of GOD made man in one person, in likeness of our flesh, dying upon the Cross by the hands of man his own creature, and for the sake of man, that HE might redeem those who "asked not for HIM," and "be found of them that sought HIM not." But everywhere may be found matter for praise and thanksgiving, everywhere may be traced the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOUR towards man. "Thy mercy, O LORD, reacheth unto the heavens, and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds. How excellent is Thy mercy, O GOD; and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings³."

And this tracing of the many tokens of the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOUR towards man in all that is written in the

² Isa. xxvi. 20.

³ Ps. xxxvi. 5. 7.

Gospels of His sayings and^d doings during these eventful days, is a subject within the reach of all. Those who look closest, and fix the eyes of their hearts longest upon the sacred picture, who hang most attentively upon the words, which fell from our LORD'S most gracious lips at this time, will gather most, and find much which others may pass over unnoticed; but all may find abundance, and may see that never was love like His love.

This is the subject to which I shall endeavour to draw your thoughts this week. I shall endeavour to set before you the various circumstances of our Blessed LORD'S conduct during His Passion, and the events leading to it, in such a manner as to point out in all of them His most merciful consideration for all around HIM: as well for those who were conspiring together and taking counsel to take away His life;—who were “set on fire” against HIM, “whose teeth were spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword⁴ ;”—as for His true-hearted, though perplexed disciples. And as we go on we shall find further subject for reflection. For since our Blessed LORD is “the brightness of GOD'S glory, and the express image of His Person⁵”—since to HIM “all power is given both in heaven and in earth⁶,” and that HE “upholds all things by the word of His power,” we may regard His dealings with the children of men as no other than a faithful pattern and reflection from the mirror of Divine perfections, of the manner in which His ALMIGHTY FATHER still deals with them.

In the long-suffering and considerateness of our Blessed and most Merciful SAVIOUR towards different classes of persons, who drew near to HIM, whether in the meek spirit of disciples, to learn of HIM, or in pride and wilfulness, to find occasion against HIM in His words, or in the carelessness and ignorance of chance bystanders, out of mere curiosity, or from selfishness, that they might “eat of the loaves” and receive some benefit at His hands;—in His different ways of dealing with them for their good, we may learn to trace corresponding methods of Divine Providence, still, and every day, exhibited in various degrees towards different classes of persons. We may trace still among those to whom the word of the Gospel is vouchsafed, and who, therefore, have

⁴ Ps. lvii. 5.⁵ Heb. i. 3.⁶ Matt. xxviii. 18.

CHRIST mystically present among them, tempers akin to those who heard and saw JESUS CHRIST in the flesh; men bearing a resemblance to the Pharisees and rulers of old, or to the thoughtless unstable multitude, or to the perplexed and doubting disciples, or to the hardened, reckless Judas; or to St. Peter, at first overconfident, though warm-hearted, but afterwards self-distrusting, and penitent and restored; or to Mary Magdalene, who loved much, and to whom much had been forgiven. And according to their several cases we may learn from pondering our Blessed SAVIOUR'S manner with them, to trace GOD'S long-suffering and mercy, whether for confirming and strengthening their faith, or for bringing them to repentance; bearing with them, if haply, before it be too late, they will open their eyes to His many warnings, and turn from the evil of their ways.

And as in each case we shall be endeavouring to trace instances of GOD'S merciful consideration for the weakness of human nature, or of His forbearance towards offenders, we shall be in the way to gather some instruction for ourselves as to our behaviour and intercourse with others. For this is the very attribute of ALMIGHTY GOD, which our Blessed SAVIOUR especially sets before us for our imitation: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your FATHER also is merciful⁷."

The case we will consider this morning shall be our LORD'S bearing and manner towards Jerusalem, the city of His cruel enemies, to which HE approached with full knowledge of all that was coming. We shall see how in this, as in all other instances, HE loved His own, "even unto the end"—even unto the end of their probation, until they had hopelessly and wilfully sold themselves to work iniquity, and, like Pharaoh, hardened themselves, and shut their ears against the truth.

The words of the text are those, with which the beloved Apostle introduces his account of his LORD'S mysterious action of washing the feet of them all after supper, the very night of His betrayal; but they may surely be extended to the whole of our Blessed SAVIOUR'S dealings among men, while on earth, in the time of His humiliation. For who were His own, whom HE loved—yea more tenderly than with a mother's love—whom HE

⁷ Luke vi. 36.

came to save, whom HE sought to gather unto HIMSELF, whom HE declared that His mission first concerned, for whom HE prayed, for whom HE died, but “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Jerusalem and her children that were within her? It was of her and her household, that it was said, “HE came unto His own, though they received HIM not⁸.” They were her citizens, over whom HE would have established His throne, though they said “We will not have this man to reign over us⁹.” They—Jerusalem and her inhabitants—were His own, though gone far astray in the wilderness of their own tangled wilful ways, whom, like the Good SHEPHERD, HE went after and sought to bring back to the fold, and for whom HE gave His life. Nor did HE cease to regard them as such, and still endeavour gently to lead them back to the “green pastures beside the true waters of comfort,” till they had hopelessly cut themselves off from the fold by their own stubborn and abandoned wilfulness. “Having loved them, HE loved them even unto the end,” till they had utterly rejected HIM.

Manifold were the ways in which HE showed His mercy and considerateness, in His manner of dealing with them, adapting HIMSELF even to their very prejudices. Did HE not from His infancy punctually fulfil their Law in all its parts, in all its offerings, ceremonies, and services? Did HE not come up to Jerusalem to their feasts? and enter into their Synagogues on the Sabbath-day, and there preach to them out of their own Scriptures? Did HE not appeal to Moses and the Prophets for a testimony, and point out the fulfilment of prophecies respecting HIMSELF, that they might believe? Did HE not declare that His message was to the House of Israel, and forbid His disciples to enter in and teach in the cities of the Samaritans, or among the Gentiles? Did HE not make them feel and confess the wisdom by which HE spake; so that His adversaries were continually put to silence, and the well-disposed confessed, “Master, Thou hast well said?” and did HE not do among them such works as none could do but by the finger of GOD? Many times also did HE conceal His miracles, and withdraw HIMSELF from them, and when HE taught among them, kept back the full meaning of what HE spake. The chief of His mighty works, and the longer time of His

⁸ John i. 11.

⁹ Luke xix. 14.

teaching, were in the rude Galilee, far away from Jerusalem; as it would seem, lest too much light should be poured in upon them, before they were ready to receive it: and that the fame of HIM might dispose them rather to listen to and believe HIM. On other occasions HE hid HIMSELF, and miraculously delivered HIMSELF out of their hands, that they might not lay violent hands on HIM as they purposed. HE kept back the knowledge that HE was the CHRIST of GOD, and left them in doubt, that so what words or deeds soever they should say or do against HIM should be against the SON of Man, and not the sin against the HOLY GHOST, which hath never forgiveness. And when at length "HE set His face to go up to Jerusalem, knowing all" that would then shortly be accomplished, still, according to all methods, which human wisdom and forbearance would approve, did HE deal with them in such sort as might fan into a flame any spark of good. Still HE gave merciful words of instruction and of warning. Still it was, "Ye will not come unto ME, that ye might have life¹." The rejecting was on their part, the offer and invitation still from HIM. How truly do the Prophet's words describe His loving and gracious appeals to them: "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me²." To the last, after all, and so much, had been done for the taking away of their stony heart of pride and unbelief, how great was His compassion for the apostate city—the city that would not receive her King, that was even now plotting against HIM, which cast HIM forth from her streets, and chose in His place one who "for sedition and murder had been cast into prison³."

Three very remarkable occasions there were in particular, on which our Blessed LORD showed His pity for the devoted city, during these His last days in the flesh. The first of them was, when on His way from Bethany to the city, as on this day, HE came to the brow of the hill, which before had hid the city from His sight. "And when HE was come near, HE beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes⁴." Even the treacherous, faithless, cruel city HE could not behold without weeping, not for

¹ John v. 40.

² Micah vi. 3.

³ Luke xxiii. 19.

⁴ Luke xix. 41, 42.

HIMSELF, but for the punishment which the sin of the people would afterwards bring upon the place and nation. And as on approaching the city HE burst forth into such tender expressions of grief for the woes, that were to come upon it, though those woes were but the just return for the ills about to be wrought there against HIMSELF; so neither did HE quit the city as on Tuesday evening, after concluding all His teaching in the Temple, though to so little effect that His enemies had been only the more maliciously set against HIM, without a similar pouring out of compassionate regret. "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not⁵!" HE "would have gathered them, but they would not:" often HE sought to do so, but as often they stood aloof from His sheltering protection. Their own royal Psalmist had taught them how great the security under this fostering care. "HE shall defend thee under His wings; and thou shalt be safe under His feathers⁶." But they would none of it.

One other very touching instance there is of our LORD'S thoughtfulness about the miseries to come upon the city and its inhabitants, under circumstances still more affecting. For as HE passed along the way of sorrows to the place where HE was to be crucified, exhausted by the sufferings of mind and body which HE had endured, and fainting beneath the burden of the Cross, which His savage executioners were now forced to find another to bear, and close in sight of yet more fearful agonies, we read, "there followed HIM a great company of people and of women, which also bewailed and lamented HIM. But JESUS, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for ME, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry⁷?" that is, if an innocent person must suffer such extremities as they

⁵ Matt. xxiii. 37.⁶ Ps. xci. 4.⁷ Luke xxiii. 27—31.

saw HIM suffer, what will be the sufferings of the wicked when GOD shall arise to judgment? Thus did our LORD yearn over His own people, loving them to the end. HE thought upon the wicked city, and mourned for it, because of the days of affliction which were coming on them, that were so mercilessly afflicting HIM.

And may we not see, in our Blessed LORD's considerateness towards the city and nation of His own people, in His holding back the offer of HIMSELF to them, which was to be their great trial; in His patience and forbearance, keeping from them knowledge which might set them more against HIM, and increase their guilt of rejecting HIM; in His readiness at all times to do them good, to be found of them that sought HIM, and to care and provide for those who thought not of HIM; in His doing so much to soften their prejudices, and to draw their sympathies towards HIM; and in His enduring love and mercy;—in all these, may we not see types and instances of His ALMIGHTY FATHER's mercy and loving-kindness towards the earth and the inhabitants of it? HE "looketh down from heaven, and beholds all the children of men; from the habitation of His dwelling HE considereth all them that dwell on the earth⁸." HE sees how many "are gone out of the way, and are become altogether abominable⁹"—that it is full of unclean things; and yet HE continues His mercies towards it. Still summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, cease not; still "HE visiteth the earth and blesses it: HE maketh it very plenteous. . . . HE prepareth the corn, for so HE provideth for the earth. HE watereth her furrows, HE sendeth rain into the little valleys thereof: HE maketh it soft with the drops of rain, and blesses the increase of it. HE crowneth the year with His goodness, and the clouds drop fatness¹." Still the air we breathe is pleasant to us, and the ever-varying changes of the season are refreshing to the eye; still, in more ways than we know, HE is near to us, watching opportunities to do us good; still, in matters of His daily Providence, "His compassions fail not; they are new every morning: and it is of His mercies that we are not consumed²." Still HE holdeth back evil: still HE delayeth the due reward of our blind-

⁸ Ps. xxxiii. 13.

⁹ Ib. liii. 4.

¹ Ib. lxx. 9—12.

² Lam. iii. 22, 23.

ness and unbelief. Again and again HE gives tokens of His nearness, and they are disregarded. HE showeth HIMSELF and His ways, but the inhabitants of the earth turn away and do not welcome HIM. Still HE punishes not as yet for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. Still HE loveth, and showeth loving-kindness toward the children of men. And how must they be described for the most part—they who are His own by creation, by redemption, by name, and solemn engagement—the Christian world? Is it not careless and unbelieving? Now and then it may be listening to the words of CHRIST, acknowledging HIM to be their King, yet breaking off the bands of His holy laws, and casting them from it; awhile giving praise “to the SON of David,” but ever for the most part taking part with His worst enemies against HIM, and carried away to evil by the tumult and passion of its own wilful inclinations?

Lastly, for ourselves, do we not read these two lessons in all our LORD’s merciful tenderness towards the wicked city, even when most cruelly set against HIM? First, that when others behave ill to us, there is more reason to feel sorrow than anger; for surely they harm themselves more than they harm us; the mischief which they intended for others will fall back more heavily upon their own heads. We should pray for them still; be gentle, meek, compassionate, considerate for their very feelings of enmity against us; still desire to do them good. For, secondly, we see, in our LORD’s words to the women who wept for HIM, His exceeding carefulness in watching for occasions to do good. They wept for HIM; HE bids them rather to do so for themselves and their children. And so, when we feel our sorrows moved by hearing or reading of our Blessed MASTER’s sufferings, “we are to think that HE turns to us, and tells us to think of ourselves and of our own sins that occasioned those sufferings; that when we venture to approach and gaze on HIM, by these contemplations we forget not ourselves also.” For “it is for ourselves we are to weep, both in His and our own sorrows³.”

³ Williams on Passion, p. 280, l. From this or the volume on the Holy Week, almost all the frequent quotations in these Sermons have been taken. They have been, besides, otherwise largely used and consulted.

S E R M O N C C I X .

OUR LORD'S FORBEARANCE TOWARDS HIS APOSTLES.

PREACHED ON MONDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

JOHN xiii. I.

“ Now before the feast of the Passover, when JESUS knew that His hour was come, that HE should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, HE loved them unto the end.”

YESTERDAY we considered our LORD's tenderness and pity manifested towards Jerusalem, the rebellious city, and its inhabitants: how long before HE came to them for the last time, HE had been thoughtful for her and her people; had borne with their waywardness, and sought to win them to HIM, that they might have life. By miracle and parable, by words of wisdom and works of power, by the Law and the Prophets, by reproof and exhortation, by warning and invitation, by showing HIMSELF among them, and by again, for a while, withdrawing: by these and other methods did HE, like the good Physician, vary His treatment towards them, if so be the inveterate evil of their hearts might give way and be healed. “ Having loved them, HE loved them unto the end.”

And if HE showed HIMSELF thus long-suffering and compassionate towards those who would not receive HIM, how much more of this overflowing goodness should we expect to trace, when we come to observe His conduct with those, to whom we may suppose the words of the text apply in a more special sense! to His own faithful, beloved, and loving disciples—those of whom HE said, “ Ye are they which have continued with ME in My temptations¹:” “ ye are My friends²:” “ ye have not chosen

¹ Luke xxii. 28.

² John xv. 14.

ME, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain³:" and again, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed ME, in the regeneration, when the SON of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel⁴."

Let us now proceed to consider some of the instances of our gracious LORD's forethought and kindness towards His chosen disciples during these last days of His humiliation and sufferings. But though I shall confine my remarks to incidents which occurred during these days, yet it ought to be borne in mind how long before our Blessed LORD had been training them on, that they might be able to endure this trial. HE had been gradually opening their understandings, by explaining to them His deep sayings and parables, and by very plain allusions to all that was now about to come to pass. Indeed, so plain and clear are these allusions, that we can scarce comprehend, how it should be that the Apostles did not fully embrace our LORD's meaning; and should hardly think of calling by the name of allusions, what to us is exact and distinct announcement, were it not that we see the Apostles themselves received these sayings in some other sense, nor saw them in their true meaning, till after their accomplishment by His death and rising again from the dead.

It would seem that this subject of His approaching suffering and death was made a very frequent topic of discourse by our LORD to His Disciples during the last year of His ministry. Thus some months—more than half a year—before the Passover, at which HE was betrayed and crucified, we read in St. Matthew, "From that time forth began JESUS" (as if from that time HE began to make this a frequent subject, of more or less clear and distinct instruction and allusion,) "to show unto His disciples how that HE must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day⁵." And on two other occasions He repeated to them, once more distinctly and circumstantially than in the passage just read, why HE set His Face so stedfastly to be at Jerusalem against the approaching Passover.

³ John xv. 16.

⁴ Matt. xix. 28.

⁵ Matt. xvi. 21.

And although the Apostles did not rightly apprehend the meaning of these things at the time HE spoke them, they were not without purpose for their confirmation, support, and comfort afterwards. "Now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe⁶." And this is often the case with warnings and lessons of Divine instruction, that they seem to fail of their purpose when given, and are neither marked or understood. But afterwards they are brought into light. They are in some way accomplished; and, on a sudden, our MASTER'S gracious forethought bursts upon us. The true meaning of words, and events, and accidents, as we might call them, at the time they happened, comes out; and we see and trace God's Providential hand—that HE foresaw and foreknew, and was directing things to our hand, and providing for our comfort and our good in matters which we, at the time, gave no heed to, or could not understand, or were startled and perplexed about. We see a meaning in the ways of GOD, which we were before wholly in the dark about, or regardless of. When we look back, we trace landmarks and tokens, whereby we discern "it is the LORD'S doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." His hand was there, and HE was the doer of it. HE was, in these ways, schooling and preparing us for what, at that time, we were not fitted to receive according to its true import. How often it is, that our LORD'S ways of mercy and of grace towards His followers at first startle and make them sad, or even offend them! Even what they do understand is almost too much for them; and did they understand all, they would be wholly out of heart, or might even go back from following HIM; but afterwards, in the hour of trial, when their hearts are softened and opened towards HIM, in sorrow and heaviness, or in returning joy, then remember they that these things were written of HIM, and that they had done these things unto HIM. And how truly, and in how many ways, are those words accomplished which our LORD addressed to His warm-hearted Apostle, St. Peter, when he could not think it fitting for his MASTER to wash his feet: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter⁷." What once we shrank from, were pained and shocked at, and could hardly bear to think of coming to pass, by and by we look

⁶ John xiv. 29.

⁷ John xiii. 7.

back upon, when we have come to better knowledge, as sources of chiefest comfort and blessing to us.

And as the time of their trial drew nearer, when "in all His affliction they should be afflicted⁸," and "be scattered as sheep without a shepherd⁹," we find many other ways in which HE was caring for them; not only preparing their minds by telling them more earnestly and more distinctly what was approaching, and what their own special dangers would be, and that at first they would give way; but providing them support, and comfort, and direction for their hour of trial; and in all manifesting the surpassing love with which "HE loved them unto the end."

HE told them plainly, "the SON of Man goeth, as it is written of HIM¹," that HE should be betrayed and crucified; but HE declared also that HE would rise again, and return unto them. HE gave them that solemn assurance, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." HE told them this on the occasion of certain Greeks (Gentiles) being brought unto HIM. And "HE HIMSELF, in His rising on Easter-Day, was the offering of the first Sheaf on the morrow after the Sabbath; and the coming in of the Gentiles on the Day of Pentecost was the gathering in of the harvest." . . . "HE HIMSELF was the grain to be mortified and to be multiplied: to be mortified by the unbelief of the Jews; to be multiplied by the belief of all nations²." HE quickened their faith in His power by the effect of His curse upon the barren fig-tree, and His further promise, that if they had but faith, they should achieve greater works than those. HE warned them of the trials they would be subjected to, in His discourse as HE sat on the mount over against the Temple, bidding them take heed that they be not deceived. In the parable of the virgins, and more solemnly still in the garden, when for grief they could not keep themselves from sleeping, HE told them, that in prayer and watchfulness would be their safeguard. In His description of the judgment of the last day, when the SON of Man shall appear in His glory, and all His angels with HIM, HE encouraged them to zeal and faithful-

⁸ Isaiah lxiii. 9.

⁹ Matt. xxvi. 31.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 24.

² Williams, Holy Week, p. 64, 5.

ness in His service, in all works of mercy for His Name's sake, by the gracious saying, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME³." And in His last evening with them, as HE sat at table with them, HE spoke to them those wonderful words of comfort contained in that Divine discourse recorded by St. John, from the 14th to 17th chapters, ending it with His great intercession for them to His heavenly FATHER. HE bade them not let their hearts be troubled, for that, though HE was going from them, they need not be at a loss for guidance in His absence; for that, as they had seen and thoroughly known His manner of life among them, so they had but to follow, for that HE was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Nor need they be cast down at the troubles which HE had been forewarning them of as their portion in the world, for that HE left them a precious boon, not given as the world giveth, that is, not depending on the course of outward things, nor yet such as the world could take from them; for that HE had overcome the world, and left them His "peace." And though HE went from them, yet HE would not be unmindful of them, for that HE went to "prepare them a place;" and though absent, yet would HE not be far away, for that they had but to "ask what they would in His Name, and it should be done unto them." Nor, indeed, would HE really be absent; for that, though unseen, yet in some inward mysterious manner HE would "come and make His abode with them;" and that from HIM should they derive all their inward life as intimately as the branches which are fed by the sap of the parent stock. Nay, and that it would be better for them that HE went, for that HE would send another COMFORTER, even the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, who should guide them into all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever HE had spoken unto them, "and should abide with them for ever." Then did HE lift up His eyes to Heaven, and pray to His FATHER for them, and solemnly commend them to His Almighty keeping, that they all might be one, as HE and the FATHER are One—"I in them, and THOU in ME, that they also may be one in Us;" and that they might be with HIM, and behold His glory, which HE had "before the founda-

³ Matt. xxv. 40.

tion of the world." And His last word and last act in behalf of them as a body still betokened the inward greatness and power, which HE veiled from the knowledge of His enemies, delivering HIMSELF into their hands of His free choice, which, at any moment, had HE so pleased, HE could have revoked. For when one drew a sword in His defence, and smote the servant of the high-priest, HE said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My FATHER, and HE shall presently give ME more than twelve legions of angels⁴?" and touched his ear and healed it, showing HE had power to strike and wound no less than to heal, if it had been His pleasure to exert it. And when HE said to the armed multitude who came forth in search of HIM, "I am HE, they went backward and fell to the ground," confessing the mysterious majesty of His presence, and their powerlessness to stand before it; and then providing for the safety of His chosen friends, "Let these go their way."

And now, shall we not learn something from these many and various instances of our LORD'S merciful condescension and consideration towards the weaknesses of His followers? Shall we not see therein a sure token that such still is the Divine Mind towards all in any way resembling His disciples in the right dispositions of their heart, whatever their errors of judgment, through weakness of understanding, or sudden surprise and fear; towards all His servants who are really well-meaning and well-intentioned, though timid and mistaken in their notions, and too much influenced in their judgments of truth by the present course of events, by the visible results of things?

The Apostles understood not their MASTER'S sayings, though so plainly spoken, concerning His violent Death; and when they first began to penetrate the meaning of these sayings, they cried, "Be it far from THEE, LORD, this shall not be;"—and when it came to pass, they all forsook HIM and fled, though they had joined with Peter in affirming that they would never so fail HIM. They were "slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken," who bore witness to His Words, and to the fulfilment of all things that were done to HIM. They had sided, more or less, with the covetous and apostate Judas against that woman, whose praise the everlasting Gospel has carried throughout the whole world,

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 53; John xviii. 6. 8.

when she poured the precious ointment over their MASTER'S feet, and had sympathized in the short-sighted pretence, "This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor⁵." Nay, on the very evening on which HE had spoken so solemnly of His sufferings then close at hand, they had had a "strife among themselves which should be accounted greatest⁶." All this our LORD knew, and only the rather shaped His Lessons to assist them under their weakness: leading them on by degrees, and giving them such instruction, as, though at first beyond them, should afterwards recur to their thoughts and give them a right judgment. HE, in a manner, stored up lessons for them, which, though at present dark and seemingly vague, would explain themselves more and more as they were brought into use. Their backwardness and misapprehensions did not check the flow of Divine goodness towards them. HE called them by the name of "*friends*;" HE gave them great and exceeding precious promises for their support and encouragement, and imparted to them *all* their portion of that farewell feast, which HE said HE had "desired with desire to eat with them before HE suffered." Their love and good intentions were accepted according to what they "had, and not according to what they had not⁷." For this saying of the Apostle may be taken as of general application in respect of all our offerings and performances. GOD is graciously pleased to regard us and them, not by the value of what is done, but by what our ability is, and by the inward purpose of our hearts.

And as the sufferings of CHRIST were a sore trial to His disciples, whether they would recognize GOD'S hand and purpose in them, and hold fast to the belief, that even when so wholly given over to the power of His enemies, their Master was HE, Whom they had trusted HIM to be: in like manner are not the sufferings and trials of Christians, who are CHRIST'S members in particular,—"*members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones⁸*,"—a subject of perplexity and anxious wonderment? Is not "that be far from THEE," the sort of impatient, restless thought of such as wonder at the sufferings and privations, the utter destitution, temporal and spiritual, to be seen among many of those upon whom is called the Name of GOD'S children? They are perplexed, and, in

⁵ Matt. xxvi. 9; John xii. 5.

⁷ 2 Cor. viii. 12.

⁶ Luke xxii. 24.

⁸ Eph. v. 30.

a manner, offended. The Gospel kingdom, as they *see* it on earth, seems to them so unlike their impressions of it as they *read* of it in the pages of the Gospel; somewhat in the same way as the Apostles were staggered, having misunderstood, and framed to themselves notions of their own respecting the kingdom of the MESSIAH, and what should befall HIM. Because of what they see around and feel in themselves, they almost doubt whether the Gospel can really make good its professions in the way of peace and blessing on earth. They have made an interpretation of their own of "the promise of the life that now is⁹," and their faith is shaken when things are accomplishing in a direction they looked not for. These afflictions in CHRIST's members become, in two ways, a sore trial to faith and constancy. They are a trial to those under them, as to bearing them rightly. They are a trial to such as have the means of alleviating them, whether they will realize to themselves, that, in ministering to such cases for CHRIST's sake, they are waiting upon their LORD and SAVIOUR in His temptations and afflictions.

And as our LORD was very gentle and forbearing towards His disciples, still repeating the same lessons, though often forgotten or misapplied, so, wherever we have better and clearer knowledge than any of our brethren, we ought to be very patient and persevering in our endeavours to engraft it into their hearts. Where the present use of such lessons seems utterly without purpose, we should nevertheless impart them, still hoping the time may come when they may remember that these things were told them: when things unobserved and not understood may rise up before them and declare their own meaning, and at last do their work and produce their effect.

They who are in any way set in charge over others, may take to themselves some very wholesome instruction, from observing the manner of our LORD's dealing with His disciples—I mean in respect to His patient forbearance, teaching and continuing to teach doctrines, which, as yet, they did not enter into,—not pressing them beyond what they could bear, yet so as that by and by they might remember that HE had told them. Parents, teachers, and ministers are not unlikely to fail of the good they might do through impatience or despondency. They are much tempted to imagine their endeavours of no use, because misunderstood, or

⁹ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

not appreciated by those in whose behalf they are made. Parents and teachers have to go on with instructions, "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." It may be, very little result is seen. It is often a very trying and a very thankless task. It seems to breed more discomfort and trouble than if things were left more to take their own course. It seems as if they could not raise the minds of the young to higher views. And at times they will be out of heart, and think it useless to endeavour further: for that they have told them the truth, and they will not understand or receive it. But though this may be so at present, yet early lessons may spring up and have their fruit, by God's grace, long after the seed has been first sown. The grown man will recall and gather fruit from the instructions of his childhood. So too may the counsel of God's minister seem thrown away, and yet thereby, in time to come, the heart may be opened to truth.

In like manner, as to persons entering into the full meaning of what they are taught: it may be it is better for them for a while that they should not. Our LORD could, if HE had pleased, have made His disciples fully aware of the meaning of the things HE spake concerning HIMSELF. But HE suffered them to remain in their misunderstanding. The whole truth might have been more than they could have borne. But HE so shaped their instructions, that afterwards the true sense of His words should rise before them, and produce their right effect.

How often too is a sinner led gradually to repentance, not at all suspecting at first what he will have to go through! For surely had he perceived this, when his heart was at first but faintly stirred towards sorrow and penitence, pride, and hardness, and shame, and impatience would have broken off the good purpose, and hurried him back into sin. We must deal with persons according as they can bear; not indeed altering the truth, but not putting forward its full brightness to eyes too weak to bear it. We must deal discreetly and patiently, and be content to wait. Even truth may harm sometimes by affrighting persons from it. And there is in our day an offence of the Cross. "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil¹."

¹ Heb. v. 14.

S E R M O N C C X .

OUR LORD'S FORBEARANCE AND CONSIDERATENESS
TOWARDS ST. PETER.

PREACHED ON TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

JOHN xiii. 1.

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when JESUS knew that His hour was come that HE should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, HE loved them unto the end.”

As we pause upon different instances of our LORD's merciful considerateness towards all around HIM, even during these last days of His unspeakable anguish, mental and bodily, two of the company of His Apostles stand out apart from the rest. Circumstances in their own conduct separated them off from the rest, and made their cases and their trials peculiar. Both cases stand out before us in the way of warning: in both there was a grievous fall; in both the sin was against knowledge, not in ignorance; in both the sin was finished the same night; in both the sin was against their Most Gracious MASTER's Person. The one was the dreadful fall of Judas, who was utterly and irrecoverably lost; the other of Peter, who was restored.

The subject we are to consider, is the wonderful gentleness and consideration with which our Blessed LORD cared for them; and first, to-day, of the history of St. Peter, which, though sad and alarming, has yet comfort and hopefulness for all true penitents.

St. Peter's fall and sin was, as you know, a deliberate, solemn denial of His MASTER, even to declaring that he never knew HIM: and this not once, but reiterated three several times, and at last with vehement swearing and oaths.

Now observe the ways in which our LORD first put him on his guard, that he might be prepared, and then further watched over him for his recovery, after he had, in His very Presence and hearing, so grievously fallen.

The very evening in the night of which this took place, our LORD three times solemnly warned him that it would be so. We read in St. John xiii., that after JESUS had washed His disciples' feet, and taken His garments, and was set down again, and after Judas had gone out, HE began to speak to them of His departure : and upon His having used the words " Whither I go, ye cannot come," St. Peter had inquired, " LORD, whither goest THOU?" JESUS answered him, " Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow ME afterwards." Peter said unto HIM, " LORD, why cannot I follow THEE now ? I will lay down my life for THY sake." JESUS answered him, " Wilt thou lay down thy life for MY sake ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied ME thrice." This was the first warning. And I suppose we should be wrong in blaming St. Peter for this profession of readiness to hazard his life in his LORD's service, as betokening great pride and self-confidence. Rather it was the affectionate warmth and loyalty of his affection, which prompted the words, perhaps almost spontaneously, scarce weighing the amount of what he proffered. It was but just before, perhaps scarce half an hour, that when our LORD had said one should betray HIM, Peter, though his conscience did not accuse him of having harboured such a thought, yet asked with alarm, " Is it I?" And having received intimation, through the sign which passed between him and St. John, that the MASTER alluded not to him, he perhaps felt the bolder to speak out the feelings of his heart, kindled at the words of tender affection, which the LORD was addressing to them.

But again, after a little further space of time had passed, our LORD turned the discourse to St. Peter. This is related by St. Luke. " And the LORD said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." And he said unto him, " LORD, I am ready to go with THEE, both into prison and to death." And HE said, " I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this

day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest ME." This was the second warning. You observe, Peter answers here with something more of confidence than before: not abashed by His MASTER's declaring a second time, that a very severe temptation was on the eve of happening to him, foreseeing the severity of which HE had anxiously prayed for him. The Apostle trusted presumptuously to his warm feeling of deep affection for His MASTER, more than to His solemn Word. Yet the warning is in more earnest and stronger terms. JESUS does not here say as before, merely "Thou shalt deny ME thrice," but, "thrice deny that thou knowest ME." Then once more, later in the night, after coming forth from the supper-room, as they were on the way towards the garden where HE endured the agony, and where HE was betrayed, *then*, (we read in St. Matthew,) saith JESUS unto them, "All ye shall be offended because of ME this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. And Peter answered and said unto HIM, *Though all shall be offended because of THEE, yet will I never be offended:*" and upon JESUS again repeating, with earnestness, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny ME thrice; Peter said unto HIM, *Though I should die with THEE, yet will I not deny THEE.*" Thus was he most solemnly and distinctly cautioned a third time. Yet, strange to say, it would seem, upon each warning, that he spake the more vehemently. For this last time he seems to stake the issue of his trial, whatever it were to be, apart from the rest, as if he counted his own firmness more to be depended on. *Though all shall be offended because of THEE, yet will I never.* Whatever the rest may do, however they may be shaken and give way, yet *I will be firm.*

It is an evil sign, when we are forward to speak for ourselves in our own favour beyond and with preference before others, and are confident in our own strength or virtue by comparison with theirs. But this sort of confidence, which we blame in the Apostle and call presumptuous, is very common. It is betokened in ways of speech which may be often heard; neither would the speakers at all allow that there was any thing of presumption in them. As when you shall hear a person say, upon being told of some grievous or unexpected sin into which another has fallen,

as if it concerned him, therefore, to take care; "I should never think of such a thing." "I have no fear about myself for any thing in that way." "I may have my faults, but I am not the least afraid of ever behaving so, whatever other people may do." Is there not some resemblance between such sayings, and "*though all men, yet will not I?*"

But to return to the Apostle. The MASTER'S care for him ceased not here. Other gentle and merciful hints and admonitions were given, both before the hour of trial, to strengthen, and after his fall, to recover and comfort him. Such are those few touching words on returning to the three in the garden, and finding them asleep, addressed specially to St. Peter, as if he specially needed to attend to them. "Simon, sleepest *thou*? Coudest not *thou* watch one hour?" And then to all alike, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again, when Peter drew his sword and smote one of them who came out against JESUS, the command, "Put up thy sword;" and the further words, "Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to my FATHER, and HE shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels," might have reminded him, that His MASTER needed no defence of man, but yielded HIMSELF of his own free choice. And had St. Peter maintained throughout his trial a right faith in what he had himself confessed, "THOU art the CHRIST, the SON of the Living God¹," he would not have given way under it. And at length, when Peter had completed the denials, even beginning to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not the man;" then the LORD turned and looked upon His fallen Apostle.

And it has been well noticed how each time Peter affirmed the false word with greater positiveness and vehemency. First of all, "I know not what thou sayest;" then denying with an oath; then beginning to curse and to swear that "he knew not the man." For persevering in a sin leads to increase of crime. Occasions of guilt are multiplied the longer we continue in it. The false word must be repeated, and then strengthened by fresh falsehood: and what was told at first to but one, must be stood to before many. We know not how deep we shall sink, or what

¹ Matt. xvi. 16.

deeper mischief than the first we may bring on our souls, when once we plant our feet in the mire of sin, and hasten not to draw them back with acknowledgment of our fault, and to wash off the stain with tears of penitence.

“The LORD turned and looked upon Peter.” At the upper part of the large hall, into which the officers had brought HIM for examination before the elders, was JESUS, buffeted and cruelly ill-treated by the soldiers, spit upon, mocked, and distracted with questions in jest or earnest, and pulled and thrust by those who stood round about HIM; but HE was not unmindful of His Apostle. No torment to HIMSELF could make HIM forget the needs of others. HE heard and marked the denials; and then, at the moment when the cock crew, “HE turned and looked upon Peter.” Who can attempt to describe all that was conveyed in that look? what thoughts it called up in the Apostle’s mind? what deep and overwhelming sorrow and penitence of soul, as the look fell upon him, and the token sounded in his ears? Blessed Apostle, whose ear and heart were open to reproof; who, though fallen, yet loved; who, before he stuck fast in the mire and the deeps swallowed him up, lifted up his eyes to HIM whence cometh our only help in the evil day of trial! Most merciful and loving MASTER, Who didst not turn THY face away; Who, though causing grief, yet didst it in compassion; Who didst waken up and recover Thy Apostle by the inward meaning of Thy gracious look; and beforehand didst appoint a further token, by which the memory of his sin should ever be kept wholesomely in remembrance! For it is said, that thenceforth the Apostle never heard the crowing of the cock, without calling to mind the word of the LORD, and lamenting over his own sin. And as he wept bitterly at the outside of the palace, tormented, we may well believe, with desperate thoughts of sorrow, (as was the unhappy Judas,) and with other evil suggestions from him who had been sifting him, and thus far with too sad success: what comfort to him to recall the MASTER’S words, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not;” to know that the LORD had prayed and surely would yet pray for him; and further, that there was still good hope for him for recovery. For was it not added? “And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” HE that had foretold the fall, thus implied also the rising again, and most graciously further marked

out a path for his services for the good of others, and a blessing and acceptance going along with them.

How many matters may we find to think on here!—on the one hand, respecting our own dangers; on the other, respecting God's merciful ways for the recovery of those who fall! How dangerous a thing is presumption and confidence in our own firmness—the being satisfied with ourselves, and fearing no ill from the hour of temptation! What a warning is here set forth for better sort of persons, who have zeal and good feelings, but not yet sufficient firmness of principle! Wonderful was the Apostle's change of mind in so few hours; but not less wonderful the inconsistency and feebleness of purpose of men, if we could compare “the resolutions they will make when alone with God at their prayers, and their conduct a few hours afterwards²,” when they come forth among those who are setting CHRIST at nought. Not less wonderful the positiveness with which a person will vehemently disclaim the thought of a great sin, as if in no danger, and take offence at wholesome caution, and within a few hours, upon surprise, consent unto it.

And do not forget to mark how, as GOD gives us warnings to keep us against temptation, by the inward voice of conscience, by outward declaration of His word, by good books, or good discourses, or wholesome counsel of friends, so when, through overconfidence or other fault, we have fallen into sin, there are outward tokens of His appointment to recall us—some cock crowing, some sound or sight, some turning and looking upon us. In the stillness of the night upon our beds, in our sudden waking thoughts, in the darkness as we walk along the way, in the house of GOD, or in the haunts of the profane, when evil has possession of our hearts, or when words of sin have but just passed our lips, there is a consciousness which will rise up sometimes, that the eye of GOD is upon us. And so it is: in mercy and love, though in sorrow. Let us not, by our indifference, cause that gracious look to be turned away.

Blessed are they who give heed to it—who regard whatever it is that raises this sudden recollection that GOD is near, as if our GOD and SAVIOUR had therein looked upon them. For surely

² On the Passion, p. 112.

HE does look down upon us, though HE reveal HIMSELF not to us by visible sign. His eye is turned upon us brighter than the light of the sun, following us in the movements of our hearts, as it did Saul on his journey to Damascus³. And if we look up in faith, we shall feel that HE is beholding us; that, in these sudden flashes that come across us, HE does turn a look upon us as truly as He turned His gracious eye upon His erring Apostle. We shall be able to trace His handwriting upon the tables of our hearts, though we see not the hand that writeth. Blessed are they who thus mark their SAVIOUR'S glance, and remember themselves, though the first thought brings shame, and sorrow, and bitter repentance. Let it be so. Peter's tears were bitter, but they fell as a refreshing shower upon a parched land. Peter's tears were bitter, and often renewed, but they wrought "repentance to salvation not to be repented of"⁴. They first flowed in bitterness, but afterwards in softened thankfulness. Neither did his LORD long leave him without special token of his accepted penitence. When HE quitted the tomb, HE left a message by the angel who was seen by the women, in token of His Apostle being restored to His confidence. "Go your way, tell His disciples and *Peter*." And HE HIMSELF appeared unto *Peter* before HE showed HIMSELF to the assembled Apostles, certifying him thereby of his full forgiveness⁵.

And observe, too, how our Blessed LORD has made one of His warnings to St. Peter in such terms, that the comfort should pass over unto us as well as to the Apostle. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Here was comfort for him in thinking of these words: first, as implying that he would be restored; secondly, in that his MASTER gave him a special work, even as arising out of his very fall. For what greater comfort to a zealous believing heart, than to see how GOD may turn the evil it has done to the good of others? And is there not comfort in these words, which passes on to us? "Conversion is not a thing accomplished once for all. St. Peter, long after his name had been written in heaven, and CHRIST had pronounced him blessed, and the FATHER had revealed CHRIST unto him, and our LORD had washed his feet, and he had partaken of His Body

³ Acts xxvi. 13.⁴ 2 Cor. vii. 10.⁵ Mark xvi. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 5.

and Blood, yet still needed conversion, and a change from self-confidence to greater humility⁶." Is it not, then, a comfort to know, that as we need, so we may receive daily conversions; nor are without place in our LORD's love and favour, because still needing them afresh?

Neither let it be forgotten, that to all returning penitents there is ground for cheering comfort in those words which our gracious LORD addressed to His Apostle: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." They may be applied to all who, having fallen, turn again with true penitent hearts, desiring opportunity to test the sincerity of their own sorrow, and their grateful thankfulness to HIM, Who hath raised them up. They may strengthen their brethren. They have known the snares and stumbling-blocks of sin; let them endeavour to remove them from others' paths. They have known the surprises of sin; let them warn others of their danger. They may have encouraged others to sin, by taking off their fears, and hardening their conscience; let them endeavour, so far as in them lies, to undo the mischief they have done. They know, to their own cost, how it is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the LORD their GOD; they, better than others, who have not been so overcome, may oftentimes point out the coming danger, and the evil consequence of a fall: let them study to use their sadly-earned experience for the deterring and recovery of others. Let them endeavour to profit their brethren in these ways, in a spirit of meekness and penitence, in the fear of GOD, and in love to their neighbour; so may they, in some small measure, bear a part in the work so affectionately committed to the restored Apostle. As they water, they may themselves be watered; as they strengthen, be themselves strengthened; as they guide and lead others in the right way, be themselves also guided and led onwards, and at length receive "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

⁶ Holy Week, p. 444.

S E R M O N C C X I .

OUR LORD'S FORBEARANCE AND CONSIDERATENESS TOWARDS JUDAS.

PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

JOHN xiii. 1.

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when JESUS knew that His hour was come that HE should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, HE loved them unto the end.”

WE come now to review our LORD's manner and conduct towards the traitor Judas—him who, even from among the chosen band of Apostles, one of His companions and familiar friends, having “eaten bread with HIM,” nevertheless “lifted up his heel against HIM.” Not upon sudden surprise, nor under influence of fear, but deliberately, with concert and contrivance, subtilly and by stealth, Judas first framed the plan, then watched the opportunity for betraying his MASTER to those who were plotting against HIM, and finally executed it with almost every circumstance of hardened treachery and ingratitude, that could be imagined. Towards this wretched man, the thoughts of whose heart HE exactly read, we shall find our Blessed LORD observed the same mindfulness and consideration for his good, that has been already pointed out in the other cases we have gone through. Herein HE gives “a pattern and evidence of that long-suffering and forbearance which surpasses the thought of man; of HIM who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For on Judas, as on the other twelve, shone the light of CHRIST's heavenly instruction, and the rain came down of His gentle, but continued warnings and reproofs¹.”

The Apostle St. John lets fall a few words concerning Judas, in his account of Mary's anointing our LORD's Feet, which it may

¹ Holy Week, p. 14.

be well to notice first of all, because they lay before us what had corrupted the traitor's heart, brought it to such an obstinate and blunted hardness, and made an opening for the Tempter to get possession of it. They seem also to bring out more fully before us our LORD's wonderful long-suffering and forbearance towards him. Numberless gentle warnings, by which, long before, HE had sought to draw out the evil from his heart, had been unheeded; yet, to the last, His loving-kindness and pity was unwearied, using all occasions for his good.

St. John, remarking upon the observation of Judas about the sum for which the ointment might have been sold and given to the poor, says, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was therein." It had been, then, it would appear, this unhappy man's custom, to purloin from the common stock of money, which he was entrusted with for purchasing the necessary provisions for his MASTER and fellow-disciples. Not that he was tempted to do this from want of things needful for his sustenance; for though our LORD was poor, yet HE took care that sufficient for their daily needs should never fail them. For HE asks them HIMSELF, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing²." But it was a covetous spirit, the love of money, which tempted him to this dishonesty.

Covetousness, then, was the sin of Judas, beginning in small pilferings, though such as showed a very bad heart; for he purloined from what was entrusted to him in confidence by his MASTER's friends, with whom he was living, and with whom he daily took his meals. And as he carried the bag or purse to provide for their daily wants, his thefts straitened those from whom he was receiving daily marks of love and friendliness. Thus beginning, the sin of covetousness gradually quite gained possession of his heart, so that he could keep back nothing that might minister to its indulgence.

And yet, how must he have shut up his heart against his MASTER's words and pattern! how often must he have resolutely turned a deaf ear to His instructions, before the evil could have so won the mastery over his better knowledge! For perhaps there is no sin against which a follower of JESUS CHRIST must

² Luke xxii. 35.

have seen and heard so much. Was not the every-day life of HIMSELF and Apostles a putting off of all covetousness? a showing that a man's life "does not consist in the abundance of the things that he has," and that it would profit a man nothing to "gain the whole world, if he lost his own soul;" and that, to be His disciple, a man "must deny himself," and leave all for His Name's sake? And how many and solemn were His lessons against fondness for riches and good things of this world! "Woe unto you that are rich"—"how hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven"—"it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle"—"take heed of covetousness"—"lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"—"sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven"—the rich man in torment had "fared sumptuously every day," and was then told, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things"—the rich man, who built barns and stored his produce, is set forth as an example of short-sighted folly—"riches of this world choke the good seed" in the parable of the sower³.

All these, and other such sayings of our LORD, and, moreover, His whole manner of life, were a continual warning against the sin to which he was giving way. He must have been, day by day, shutting his ear to one subject of His MASTER's repeated instructions. And this may account for his bold effrontery to the last, and his seeming indifference to the many gentle warnings given, during these last days, to turn him aside from his purpose. For it would appear that vexation about the ointment, out of which he would have made his gain, and some offence, perhaps, taken at his MASTER's words reproving the complaint against the woman, determined him to seek opportunity to betray HIM.

I say, Judas having so long steeled his mind to give no heed to his MASTER's lessons against the love of money, and so used himself to listen, without attention or thought of complying, may account for his deadness to all warnings at last. For to live with a person, whom we feel we ought to respect, whose instructions we know to be for our good, yet settling with ourselves, that, on such and such points, we will not listen to or be advised by him, has a very injurious effect upon the conscience. It makes a kind

³ Luke xii. 15; Matt. xvi. 26. 24; Luke vi. 24; Mark x. 23. 25; Matt. vi. 19; Luke xvi.; xii. 18; Matt. xiii. 22.

of deceit and concealment almost necessary—a pretence that we think that right and best for us, which we have no thought of endeavouring at. It raises a kind of ill-tempered self-will, a dogged dislike to hear the subject touched on, and sets us on making light of what we hear; besides, that it is accustoming us to act against our own secret sense of what is good, and so tends to dim and quench the light within us upon other matters also.

And this explains how it often comes to pass, that persons of good abilities, and well instructed, do not seem to perceive or feel the force of truth. They have tampered with their conscience in the matter of some sin, which they habitually indulge; and this has dimmed the eye of their soul in the discernment of all moral truth.

The first thing to be remarked in all our LORD'S dealings with the traitor, is His wonderful forbearance in concealing him. HE knew Judas' covetousness—HE knew his dishonesty—HE knew his hypocrisy—HE knew when worse thoughts than even of these sins took possession of his heart—HE watched his treachery—HE knew when he first conceived, when he matured, and when he executed his plot for betraying HIM; yet HE made not his sin known to the rest. Or, rather, HE screened the sinner from their knowledge, even when he spoke openly of the sin. HE told what should be done, but not who should be the doer of it. HE gave him warnings, which he alone could take to himself, and in which Judas might have supposed, that though his MASTER foresaw *what* was coming to pass, HE knew not *by whom*. And when JESUS made it plain to Judas that he was not hidden, still the rest were kept in ignorance. Nay, and which seems more wonderful, he suffered Judas to exercise a mischievous influence over the minds of the other Apostles, and draw them into error, without exposing the base wicked motive which prompted his pretended charity. For his pretence, that the ointment should be sold and the money given to the poor, carried away some of the other Apostles to his part; for we read in St. Mark, that “some had indignation within themselves” and “murmured against her.” But had they been taught what manner of man he was that suggested this, they would have mistrusted him, and not so easily been led away to disapprove what their MASTER permitted to be done to HIM.

Or, perhaps, this very thing might have been for their good, as well as out of long-suffering towards Judas. It might be good

for them thus to learn to mistrust pious pretences, which interfered with sacrifices in their LORD'S service, though it were from one of their own company; and good for them to earn this experience, while their MASTER was at hand to correct the mischievous impression.

And now consider our LORD'S behaviour to Judas, who had already made his bargain with the Chief Priests, as to-day, and was then actually on the watch, contriving the time and place, when His MASTER might be conveniently taken. See HIM rising from Supper, and, girded with a towel, stooping down and washing the disciples' feet. And now HE cometh to Peter, who at first would not suffer His LORD to do so menial an act to him. But then he is told, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with ME:" then was Peter as eager for the washing as before he was backward. Then some further words were spoken, and the LORD said, "Ye are clean, *but not all.*" And now it is the traitor's turn to have this office done for him. His MASTER pauses before him. How must his heart have throbbed. He had heard HIM say just before, that if HE washed not any one of them it would be a token to the rest, that he had no part with HIM. He had heard HIM say too, "Ye are clean, but not all." Had then His LORD detected him? would HE now expose and denounce him before the rest? How deep must Judas have drawn his breath as His LORD comes close to him. Does JESUS turn away? No, HE stoopeth down before *him* also. HE places the basin, HE washes and wipes his feet, as HE had done for the rest. Then, after HE had sat down, HE tells them this was a token of His love, and to be a memorial to them to be forward in all kind and loving offices one for the other.

Perhaps, then, Judas thought he was not known. But does not His MASTER'S love and meekness touch him? Can he still hold to his purpose to betray HIM who has thus testified His readiness in all ways to minister to his good?

But again he is disquieted with doubt and fear about His MASTER'S knowledge. For JESUS, with a countenance of deep sorrow, returns to this subject. HE tells them, "He that eateth bread with ME hath lifted up his heel against ME"—then, after a short pause, HE continued, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray ME"—one of twelve—"the SON of Man in-

deed goeth, as it is written of HIM, but woe to that man by whom the SON of Man is betrayed: good were it for that man if he had never been born." Still the MASTER has not named any one. But yet can Judas persevere in his wicked purpose, after those terrible words of judgment against the man who shall execute this accursed deed? Though His MASTER's loving act just now did not move him by love, will he not now be wrought upon by terror? Will he dare this curse?

But now the fear of detection is brought still closer, for they all begin to ask, "LORD, is it I?" And it is answered, "It is one of you that dippeth with ME in the dish." But this might apply to several who had already dipped their bread into the dish that stood before JESUS; and the words, "It is he to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it," were probably whispered to St. John, who, having been beckoned to by St. Peter, had asked, "LORD, who is it?" And what will Judas now do? Is he lost to all good feeling? Will he yield to the fear he feels at heart, or to any touches of returning love at His MASTER's forbearance and goodness? or will he brazen it out, and take the chance of being undetected? "Then Judas, which betrayed HIM, answered and said, MASTER, is it I? (But coming close and asking in an under tone, for fear.) HE said unto him, Thou hast said, and gave him the sop." Still the MASTER revealed him not; but added aloud these words, "What thou doest, do quickly;" and the others, so had they been taken up with sorrow for their LORD, and thinking fearfully about themselves, thought that Judas had received some commission about buying or giving to the poor.

Then immediately Judas went out, not like his brother Apostle, when his sin was brought to mind, to weep bitterly with tears of penitence, but with hardened recklessness to hasten his schemes, if haply he might carry them into effect before His MASTER should disclose his treachery to the rest. But not yet was our LORD's forbearance and compassion for the wretched man exhausted. His words were full of kindness to the last. "*Friend*, wherefore art thou come?" "Judas, betrayest thou the SON of Man with a kiss?" HE addresses him by name as one with whom HE had lived on terms of intimacy—the name by which HE had called him, while he was with HIM as His disciple. Neither does HE withhold from him the name *friend*, or com-

panion, for so is the more proper meaning of the word. How reproachfully, yet with what mournful tenderness, and without anger or passion, does the word sound! How it sets forth the case which the Psalmist prophetically describes: "Yea, even mine own familiar friend whom I trusted, who did also eat of my bread, hath laid great wait for me." And what bread was it probably which had last been received by Judas? probably, (though it is not quite clear whether he had not gone out first,) the bread which the LORD had broken and blessed with uplifted hands, and given to His disciples for their lasting memorial of HIM, under the sacred and mysterious appellation of His Body.

Most wonderful forbearance indeed! But while we wonder at this, we are apt to overlook cases of a like sort not so far removed from us. For is not this very much the way of GOD's dealings in His ordinary providence? Sinners are borne with by ALMIGHTY GOD. They and their sins are left in obscurity. Grievous sins are planned and perpetrated, and no discovery made. Oftentimes sinners are suspected, but not known: there is an uneasy doubt about them, but no certain proof. Meanwhile "these prosper in the earth, and come into no misfortune." But the thought comes not that this is the long-suffering of GOD; waiting, if haply they will repent. Rather it is too much as if they said in their hearts, "Tush, shall God perceive? is there knowledge in the Most High¹?" So they become through abuse of goodness more fearless and bold. "They do even what they lust. They corrupt others, and speak wicked blasphemy." And yet it is true that GOD is gently seeking to recal them.

And this pattern of our LORD's own conduct and the analogy of GOD's dealings, teaches us to be forbearing towards the worst offenders: not to publish unnecessarily, or blazon abroad their evil deeds; and all along to be gentle, meek, and considerate in our behaviour towards them. Not indeed in any way conniving at their sin, or seeming indifferent about evil, but even while we show hatred of sin, showing compassionateness towards the sinner, remembering always, that, bad as he may be, yet is he one of our company, a brother Christian, one whom our common MASTER bears with and has not openly cast off, and who, therefore, may even yet turn, and put away the evil of his doings, and repent, and be saved.

¹ Ps. lxxiii. 8 11.

SERMON CCXII.

OUR LORD'S FORBEARANCE TOWARDS PONTIUS PILATE.

PREACHED ON THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

JOHN xiii. 1.

“ Now before the feast of the Passover, when JESUS knew that His hour was come, that HE should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, HE loved them unto the end.”

HITHERTO we have been considering our LORD's gracious and compassionate dealings towards those who were united to HIM by some tie of relationship. Jerusalem was “ the city of the LORD of Hosts¹ ;” and her children within her, His chosen inheritance, “ His vinyard, His pleasant plant,” “ to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of GOD, and the promises, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, CHRIST came.” No wonder that the LORD should be very patient and pitiful towards her and her children, and long bear with her, and use all means for her recovery. If not for her own, yet “ for the fathers' sake ” HE would show mercy unto her.

Neither were all within her walls wicked. Among her rulers were a Nicodemus, and a Joseph of Arimathea, and many of them besides believed on HIM, though fearing to confess HIM; the

¹ Psalm xlvi. Rom. ix. 1, 5.

wife of Herod's steward was a disciple; of the common people were many who heard HIM gladly, insomuch that the Chief Priests feared to take HIM at the feast, lest there should be an uproar; and there followed HIM along the way of sorrows to the place of crucifixion a great company of people bewailing and lamenting HIM. Besides, there were all her thousands of young children, towards whom the LORD was ever tender and loving, upon whom would come, by the imprecation of their fathers, miseries and punishment for the guilt of His Blood.

Much more should we expect to trace every token of most loving consideration for His Apostles in all our LORD said and did, for the strengthening of their faith and constancy under their fiery trial. And even towards the traitor, the long and close intimacy with his MASTER, to which he had been admitted, seems, in a degree, to explain the marvellous and surpassing gentleness, pity, and lovingkindness shown him.

But now we are to pass beyond these limits; and to review this same Divine temper exhibited towards those whose hands were against HIM in His death; towards both Pontius Pilate and the Chief Priests—the one an alien and stranger from the commonwealth of Israel in tongue, and nation, and office; the others aliens to the true Israel of God, through the obstinate blindness and evil of their hearts, and in their deeds declaring themselves of their “father the devil¹.”

To-day, of Pilate. I shall endeavour to point out to you how towards him also our LORD was very considerate and watchful for his good. It is true Pilate was a Gentile, but not therefore beyond *His* care, “in Whom we live, and move, and have our being²,” and Whose offspring are all the children that dwell on the face of the whole earth. And other Gentiles our LORD had suffered to draw near to HIM for good: as the wise men at His birth, and those Greeks brought to HIM in the Temple but three days before, and the Syrophenician woman, and the Centurion, whose servant HE healed. And it is natural to suppose that no one could be brought near to our LORD, to watch and observe HIM, without having therein some great opportunity of good placed in his way.

It is true Pilate was party in a sinful deed, but that was not

¹ John viii. 44.

² Acts xvii. 28.

until he gave consent against his own conscience, that the sentence should be as the Chief Priests required. There was no sin in Pilate in acting as a Judge over our SAVIOUR, for he was bound by his office to examine those accused before him. It is true, moreover, Pilate was a wicked man; but so was the woman taken in adultery, and to her JESUS said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more¹:" and the Samaritan woman was living in a state of sin when JESUS conversed with her, so that her heart was opened, and she believed².

In short, that our LORD should in mercy have dealt with him, with a considerate watchfulness for his good, although he was very unworthy of the least of such merciful considerations, is but exemplifying a truth, for which the Psalmist was continually pouring forth praise. "Thy mercy, O LORD, reacheth unto the heavens;" "The earth is full of THY goodness." "THOU, LORD, shalt save both man and beast; how excellent is THY mercy, O LORD³!"

But still greater and still more excellent are GOD'S mercies in CHRIST JESUS. And as HE died for all men, and for such among them as Pilate, would HE not put all, to whom HE drew near, in the way to know His saving health upon earth, that they should not sin against HIM? "For HE is for salvation even to the end of the earth⁴."

It should be observed also, that, though we may be able to trace merciful forbearance and considerateness in a very high degree in our LORD'S conduct, it does not follow we should be able to trace any good effect from it. As in the case of Judas, all His loving-kindness and long sufferance may become but aggravations of hardened guilt, being unheeded. For GOD permits us the exercise of a free will in respect of all the merciful opportunities HE puts in our way, for our spiritual good. We may reject them utterly: we may make the things which "should have been for our peace an occasion of falling." It is enough, if we are able to perceive, that, on an honest and sincere heart, these things could not have been without their effect for good.

And very remarkable it is, what an effect was produced on the mind of Pilate by our LORD'S bearing and words in his presence. It was probably not more than five hours from the time, when

¹ John viii. 11.² John iv. 18.³ Ps. xxxvi. 5. 7.⁴ Is. xlix. 6.

JESUS was first led away to Pilate to the passing sentence, that it should be as the Jews required. Moreover, JESUS came before him under circumstances of greatest disadvantage. Already HE had suffered great violence and indignity from the servants and officers of the Chief Priests. His countenance was marred and bruised with blows and with the spitting; His bodily frame was feeble and exhausted. HE had none to speak for HIM, to maintain His cause; while His adversaries were many in number, and powerful, men of station and reputation, loud in their accusations, unscrupulous about the truth of them, or by what means established; and the accusations very grave and serious—namely, of sedition and of making HIMSELF a King.

Now let us observe our LORD's behaviour, and its effect upon Pilate. Having learned from the Chief Priests, that their charge against JESUS was for making HIMSELF a King, Pilate went into the judgment-hall and called JESUS: and JESUS stood before the governor. Pilate then questioned JESUS concerning this charge. "Art THOU the King of the JEWS?" And then, upon some further inquiry, as if quite satisfied from the answer, and from our LORD's pitiable appearance, that this was not the real ground against HIM, he asked, "What hast THOU done?" Then, further convinced by our LORD's words, "MY Kingdom is not of this world," that the charge was vain and unfounded, went out and saith unto the Chief Priests and multitude, "I find no fault in HIM." But even in the judgment-hall, while our LORD stood as a culprit before him, so struck had Pilate been, that when JESUS spake those words, "Every one who is of the truth, heareth MY Voice," he for a moment forgets his office as a judge, and asks, "What is truth?" as if he desired to be instructed¹. But now the Chief Priests were clamorous against HIM, and accused HIM of many things, finding their first charge likely to fall to the ground. And again Pilate returned and told JESUS of what things they accused HIM. "But JESUS answered not a word, so that Pilate marvelled;" and to get rid of the case, hearing that JESUS was of Galilee, sent HIM to Herod. Finding that HE was again sent back to him, he proposed that since neither had Herod found any fault in HIM, he would "chastise HIM and then release HIM," according to the custom at the feast; offering them a

¹ On the Passion, p. 193, 199.

choice between JESUS and Barabbas, the robber and murderer, in hope that by their choice he might set JESUS at liberty. And again, when they cried out "Crucify HIM," he said unto them the third time, "Why, what evil hath HE done?" Next he "delivered HIM to be scourged," fearing to release HIM after the violence of the people: and after they had scourged HIM he brought HIM forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and saith, "Behold the MAN;" trusting thus to move their pity as for one who had now been sufficiently punished. But still the savage cry was the same, "Crucify HIM!"

And now once more Pilate brought JESUS into the judgment-hall, being "the more afraid," as it is said, and saith unto HIM, "Whence art THOU?" "Where dost THOU really come from?" for he had heard the Chief Priests say "that HE made HIMSELF the SON of GOD." But JESUS gave him no answer. This silence a second time maintained, increased Pilate's fear and wonder. At length, upon his saying, "Speakest THOU not unto me? Knowest THOU not that I have power to crucify THEE, and have power to release THEE?" JESUS answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." And from thenceforth we read, Pilate thoroughly convinced of His innocence, and with a sort of indescribable awe and misgiving, as feeling there was some great mystery hanging over this prisoner, "sought to release HIM."

But then came the threat of appealing unto Cæsar, if he let HIM go, and Pilate gave way from fear, and condemned JESUS to death. But not yet was he suffered to commit the sin, without one more warning. For when he was set down on the judgment-seat and about to pass sentence, his wife sent unto him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just MAN, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of HIM." Thus again he was checked. But the fear of man prevailed with him more than the fears of the unseen world. For when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, in the way of persuasion, but that rather a tumult was made, having taken water, he washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am guiltless of the Blood of this JUST PERSON. See ye to it." And then delivered HIM up to their will, that HE might be crucified.

How wonderful was all this transaction! Is not the hand of God plain throughout? Pilate was not a tender, scrupulous person, desirous to administer his office with uprightness. He was a covetous man, hated for his extortions and cruelties, and so profane and reckless about human life, that he had not long before ordered the slaughter of a number of persons, suspected of sedition, even in the very temple where they were engaged in offering sacrifice. This is alluded to by St. Luke (ch. xiii.) where he speaks of "those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." This man, being such an one, was nevertheless, in the space of a few hours, so awed and impressed with a certain wonderful greatness about JESUS CHRIST, though in bonds, and brought before him as a criminal of the worst sort, with every manner of contempt and hatred on the part of His accusers, who were the chief men of the nation, that he repeatedly declared His innocence and sought to release HIM; and at the last, though pressed by fear of Cæsar's displeasure, to whom the Jews threatened to appeal, dared not condemn HIM directly, but tried to make himself believe that he put off the guilt upon them, allowing the act as emanating from his office, but seeking to shift the responsibility upon others.

And as the whole transaction is very wonderful, do we not also see in it our LORD's great considerateness and forbearance even towards Pilate, who was behaving so unfaithfully as a judge? Did HE not move him towards what was right, as well by His silence as by His words? HE "kept silence, yea, even from good words." When HE held His tongue, His silence struck Pilate with marvel and fear. When HE spoke concerning His Kingdom and the truth, it seemed for a moment as if the heathen would have listened and sought instruction. Surely if Pilate had listened, would not JESUS "have led him into higher things, and opened his heart to the truth?" If HE took such pains even with Judas, should we doubt that HE would do all to recover an ignorant Gentile?

But although the effect produced in Pilate's mind did not serve to his own benefit, it is worthy of remark how God turned it to the benefit of others, who should hereafter believe. For, first, we have it pronounced by the heathen governor, that he found no fault in HIM; even His enemies being judges, no sin could be brought

home against HIM. Secondly, Pilate, in anger and contempt at the violence and hypocrisy of the Jews, wrote that title in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, which was set over the Cross, "This is the KING of the Jews." Thus he "told it out among the heathen, that the LORD is King;" that out of Judah went forth a Ruler, and that GOD had "set His King upon His holy hill of SION."

Thus GOD turns the acts of those who cast aside His mercies to the benefit of others, in ways not thought of; and opportunities which HE gives to them, being rejected, become lessons of instruction to those that come after.

And do not wonder that every day I point out this same lesson of our LORD's forbearance and considerateness towards all, who approached His Presence, whether with good or evil purpose of heart. For this is the very subject I wish your thoughts to dwell much on at this time; how, having loved His own, (and all whom HE came to redeem may be called His own,) "He loved them unto the end." And so I have endeavoured to set forth this lesson, variously illustrated in respect to our blessed LORD's dealings with different persons, taken as types of like-minded classes in all times.

There are, however, two further remarks upon the case of Pilate in particular, with which I will conclude, well suited for our own careful consideration.

First. Our LORD was brought before Pilate to be judged by him. He was for several hours in Pilate's presence, seen and heard of him; and Pilate was obliged, as judge, to inquire of HIM and of His doctrine. That once a great opportunity was brought before him, which he might have turned to inestimable benefit. That once, and only once. The same opportunity could not be repeated. His conscience, moreover, was touched. It prompted him in the right direction what to do: and he had the power and was in the place to follow its dictates. But he disregarded his conscience, and the opportunity passed away. He remained as before CHRIST stood before him, the corrupt, selfish, unprincipled heathen, only with something more to answer for, for this opportunity neglected and misused. Now, for aught we know any opportunity of doing good presented to us, may be of this nature. It may be, if we miss it, and let it pass *now*, we shall not have it again. It may be that in the nature of things it cannot

come over again, (as the opportunity for a son to do something for the maintenance of his parents in their old age,) or our feelings in the matter may be so different, that it may never seem the same to us, as when our conscience did that once speak to us what we ought to do. Some strong impulse may move us. We put it down. It passes away and is felt no more. Had we then boldly obeyed that impulse, and boldly taken the right course, though at a sacrifice, it might have brought us a blessing for life; but let pass, it becomes only one of the mercies placed within our reach, which we must answer for having quite neglected.

Secondly, as JESUS CHRIST was silent in the presence of Pilate, and suffered him to be as a judge over HIM, so does GOD in many ways hold His peace, and keep silence before the wilfulness and unbelief of men, and leave them to sit in judgment upon and decide about holy things, which they understand not, and is near to them, when they know Him not. But there is a time when our GOD shall come and shall not keep silence. Then HE will come to be *our* Judge. Then we shall stand before HIM to be judged, as in our day HE leaves His cause to be judged of, as though HE stood before us. Then HE will choose, whether HE will receive, or whether HE will reject us; as at this time we choose or reject HIM in respect of His dealings with us, and in respect of our serving and confessing HIM before men. May HE in that awful day be gracious to us! May HE show to us more love and mercy than we, in our day, have shown toward HIM.

SERMON CCXIII.

OUR LORD'S FORBEARANCE TOWARDS THE CHIEF PRIESTS.

PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY.

LUKE xxiii. 34.

“ Then said JESUS, FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

SEVEN times did our most merciful and loving SAVIOUR speak, after HE had been fastened to the CROSS. And the words just read were the first of those speeches, uttered, as is supposed, just as HE was beginning to experience the first agonies of that dreadful punishment, and while the nails were yet being driven through those tender parts of His Hands or Feet. His own increasing tortures did but quicken the flow of His Divine charities. For, few as the words are, they are very comprehensive, asking the very greatest boon, nay, every thing that can be needed on behalf of offenders, and of very wide extent in respect of the persons who come within the compass of their benevolence.

For who would think of limiting their application within their narrowest possible span, as uttered only, or chiefly, on behalf of the four soldiers, who were the mere hardened instruments for executing the will of others? For surely they apply to all who had part in His unjust sentence, as much as to the mere executioners of it—to Pilate, to the Chief Priests, to the false witnesses, to the excited and savage multitude, to the rebellious city, to all who mocked and cruelly used HIM—to all sinners, at all times, whose burden and chastisement was then laid upon HIM, who can in any way be said to sin in ignorance, not knowing what they do, as to the full enormity and proportions of guilt in what they sin.

For one only of those whose hand had been heaviest against HIM, must we conclude His prayer could not avail—for the wretched Judas, who had already cut himself off from the hope of benefit, having laid desperate hands on his own life.

Specially, then, we may apply the prayer as uttered on behalf of the Chief Priests, whose hands, next to those of Judas, had been heaviest against HIM, and whose guilt had been most complicated and deliberate, though they were not yet hopelessly swallowed up in it. The very fact of their having a heavier burden of guilt on them, would be the very reason for believing that our most compassionate SAVIOUR had a chief eye to their case in His prayer. And we have the testimony of Scripture, that, in some sense, they knew not what they did. Thus St. Peter testifies of them: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." And St. Paul: "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the LORD OF GLORY." And our LORD HIMSELF had said, "Ye neither know ME nor My FATHER;" and again of His Apostles: "Whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth GOD service: and these things will they do, because they have not known the FATHER nor ME¹."

It is upon the case of the Chief Priests—those who actually took part in procuring sentence against our LORD—that I wish to turn your attention to-day; and shall endeavour here, as in the other cases already reviewed, to show how our Blessed LORD exercised a very merciful considerateness and forbearance towards *them* also during these days of His last sufferings, which (humanly speaking) were of their bringing on.

To bring their case clearly before you, it may be well shortly to refer back to what led to their deliberate determination of putting JESUS to death. It was upon receiving the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. "From that time forth" (the evangelist St. John writes), "they took counsel together for to put HIM to death." Nay, and further, as the same evangelist writes, "the Chief Priests consulted, that they might put Lazarus to death also, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed in JESUS." Next as to their plans for accomplishing their purpose. Their first plan seems to have been to catch HIM in His words, which they endeavoured to

¹ Acts iii. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 8. John viii. 19; xvi. 2.

carry into effect during our LORD'S teaching in the Temple on Tuesday, by subtle questions previously arranged, from which they did not think HE could have escaped without committing HIMSELF. Having so signally failed in this scheme, that none of them durst ask HIM any more questions; on the next day (Wednesday), while the Chief Priests and scribes were in consultation together how they might take JESUS by subtilty and kill HIM, came Judas and made his bargain for thirty pieces of silver, said to be worth about 3*l.* 15*s.* of our money. Having next succeeded in their treacherous plot for apprehending JESUS, they put HIM on His trial, having bribed false witnesses to lay a charge against HIM. Being foiled in bringing this charge home, HE was, after further examination by the High Priest, condemned under pretence that HE had spoken blasphemy. But this charge they knew could not stand before Pilate, so to him they accused JESUS of a political offence—that "HE stirred up the people, and gave HIMSELF out to be a king." We have seen, in considering the case of Pilate, how, notwithstanding the governor's repeated declaration of the innocence of JESUS, and his evident unwillingness to proceed further, and his three several appeals to their compassion and sense of justice, and that very remarkable proceeding of washing his hands, that he might be "guiltless of the blood of that just person," the Chief Priests extorted from him the sentence, that JESUS should be crucified.

To this sketch of their proceedings should be added the savage cruelty, with which they exulted in the insults and ill usage heaped upon HIM by the soldiers and bystanders; and, at last, their mocking HIM on the Cross, reproaching HIM with the very works of mercy HE had done, even, as it would seem, with that greatest of miracles, the raising the dead man from the grave, saying, "HE saved others, HIMSELF HE cannot save;" thus apparently allowing that HE had done so. Nor should their detestable hypocrisy be forgotten, in refusing to go into Pilate's judgment-hall, for fear of polluting themselves before the Passover, by entering under a heathen roof, when they were imbruing their hands knowingly in the blood of an innocent person.

Towards such, what forbearance and consideration could we expect to be shown? and, least of all, by the very victim of their abominable wickedness? Can it be possible, that the words which have been made our text for the week can apply to their

case also? Can it be said, in any sense, of them, that **JESUS CHRIST**, thus persecuted, hated, craftily conspired against, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, reviled, mocked, savagely tormented, and now suffering agonies, to end in death, at their hands, "having loved them, loved them unto the end?" The words of the text are, in themselves, the shortest and most ample proof and answer, that indeed it was so. **HE** did indeed love them, and love them unto the end, notwithstanding all that had passed. Neither their wickedness nor His sufferings could extinguish or intermit the yearnings of the love **HE** bore them. And the love that was so strong in death would not be lacking in previous kind offices towards them. Let us briefly call to our thoughts the many methods by which our merciful **LORD** sought to move the Chief Priests to a better mind towards **HIM**.

To begin with what ought to have prepared their minds to give **HIM** a far different reception at this Passover. They had, on former occasions, when **HE** had been among them, impatiently asked, "How long dost thou make us to doubt?" "Show us a sign, that we may believe." And a few months before this Passover, our **LORD** had shown them the greatest sign of His Divine power. **HE** had raised to life again, after he had been dead and buried, and his body had begun to see corruption, a man known to many of them, living at a village hard by to the city, whom many did go out and see. Before **HE** appeared among them again, they had had several months to consider, Whose presence among them was betokened in a work of such mighty power. And we are told its effect upon their wicked hearts. Though they could not deny the miracle, "from that day forth they took counsel together to put **HIM** to death;" and afterwards further consulted how they might put Lazarus also to death, "because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on **JESUS**." Yet even this desperate hardness did not prevent our **LORD**, on these days, from still giving many opportunities for recovering themselves, and coming to a better mind; opportunities which an honest mind could not have failed so far to have been influenced by, at least, and so far to have understood, as to have turned them aside from their sin in conspiring against His life.

Such were, secondly, that wonderful procession when our **LORD**

rode into the city, and all the city was moved, as by some Divine impulse, and the multitudes cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and proclaimed HIM the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Thirdly: such that mysterious act of cleansing the Temple, and casting out them that sold and bought there, alone, unaided, and by some unaccountable fearfulness and majesty in His deportment, awing all into an instant fearful obedience.

Fourthly: such, again, His course of teaching in the Temple on the following day, when HE swept from before HIM, as cobwebs, the subtle questions which they had artfully woven to entrap HIM, and so confounded them with the wisdom and searching truth of His answers, that "no man thenceforth durst ask HIM any more questions."

Fifthly: such, again, was His appealing to their Scriptures for proof of His doctrine; as about the stone which the builders rejected, and ALMIGHTY GOD'S declaration at the bush, and His question on the sense of the verse of the Psalm, "The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit THOU on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool:" herein showing them that Moses and the Prophets spake of HIM.

Sixthly: and such the solemn threats and warnings so authoritatively pronounced, after which HE went forth out of the Temple. What honest mind could have failed to trace the wisdom and power of GOD in all these things!

Then, further, seventhly, when now in their hands as a criminal, first of all their own false charge, which they had prepared against HIM, would not hold together; and next, when they brought HIM to Pilate upon other accusations, neither could these be at all sustained. Pilate, an unprincipled judge, as they knew, again and again protested His innocence, interposed in His favour, almost entreated for HIM, and appealed to their compassion; and, at last, though driven to do as they desired against his wish and conscience, could not repress an unaccountable dread which came over him, in passing sentence upon this friendless MAN, who yet, in outward appearance was "a worm, and no man, a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people¹." What honest mind could have resisted this testimony to the innocence of JESUS!

And, eighthly, it should be further noticed, as part of our

¹ Ps. cxvii. G.

LORD'S merciful forethought for their good, how HE ordered all circumstances; for instance, in the proceedings at the Cross in the way of fulfilment of Prophecies, in His Death and Burial, and in their sealing and watching the sepulchre: so that, if not before their sinning in taking away His life, in the way of prevention, yet afterwards they should stand out, in the way of proof and testimony to His Resurrection; that they might, at last, turn and repent them of their heavy guilt, and believe and be saved.

But the two crowning acts of His considerateness and mercy towards them we learn in His words on the Cross: "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Great and surpassing mercy and compassion, that HE should, at such a time, have uttered a prayer for them at all; but even more surpassing and wonderful it seems to be, that HE should knowingly have beforehand so dealt with His murderers, as to reserve a plea in their excuse: so that HE might not only pray for them, but have some grounds of extenuation for them, on which to press His petition on their behalf: "They know not what they do." But who had kept back from them and concealed this knowledge but JESUS HIMSELF?—this knowledge, which, if HE had imparted and they rejected, would have made their guilt unpardonable, so that there would have been no hope of forgiveness? HE had not suffered them to know that HE was the CHRIST of GOD, the eternal and only-begotten SON of the FATHER, since their hearts were too evil to receive the knowledge. And now that they have accomplished their wickedness, not knowing more than that they had procured sentence against an innocent person, by false and unjust methods, like as their fathers had killed the Prophets, HE pleads this unto His FATHER as the very plea, and the only plea, on which to entreat for their pardon. HE keeps back this one and only possible mitigation of their guilt, without which they would have been wholly without excuse, that His most precious Blood might not be shed in vain even for *them* by whom it was most wickedly shed; and that the very persons whose hands had been most against HIM, might be the *first* to prove the virtue of His Death. Thus HE prayed for them. And bear in mind the circumstances. Where does HE pray?—on the tree of the Cross. At what time?—when HE was quite spent and exhausted with suffering; when the sharp agony of the fresh-driven nails was

even now thrilling through every nerve of His tortured Body, and the chills of death were already coming over HIM. In what manner?—not sitting, or lying at His ease, but borne upright upon His pierced Feet and outstretched Hands. In what terms?—not many, but full of affection, and mingled with sighs, and tears, and blood. For whom?—for sinners; for His enemies, persecutors, and tormentors. What doth HE ask?—mercy. And before whom?—in the hearing of all, even His adversaries, who were loudly mocking and jesting upon HIM.

Oh! most merciful, and compassionate, and forgiving SAVIOUR, may we bow our hearts before Thy Cross, in adoration, thankfulness, penitence, and love. May this Thy prayer be offered in our behalf for our sins. May they never reach such guilt, that THOU canst not plead, “They know not what they do.” May we never sin wilfully, presumptuously, deliberately, with full knowledge of the guilt of what we do. Rather do THOU keep back from us such knowledge as we should turn to our greater guilt, through our unworthiness to receive it, till Thy grace may enable us to bear it. May we learn of THEE mildness and charity towards all, and on all occasions!

We are living in the midst of GOD'S family, in a Christian land, whose inhabitants are engrafted members of CHRIST'S Holy Church; yet we see many and grievous sins to abound around us: many and grievous sins, the true guilt of which the doers of them do not seem to perceive. Good people, well instructed in GOD'S law, are shocked at liberties and neglects, particularly with respect to direct duties of religious service towards GOD, which many are in no fear about. Yet there is a duty in such matters. And sins may have a name and nature in the sight of GOD, the guilt of which even the better sort among us do but very faintly conceive of. Such, for instance, may be sins of the thoughts, or profaneness in our prayers, or misuse or neglect of religious opportunities offered to us, as of the Holy Communion. And of these and other like matters the careless and irreligious seem to make scarce any account. In one point of view, this sort of ignorance is to be accounted their own fault, at once the consequence and punishment of their evil ways. In another point of view, it may be, GOD mercifully withholds from them the knowledge which would but increase their guilt, by rendering them the more reckless and deliberately unbe-

lieving, as Judas was worse than Pilate and the Chief Priests, having given the rein to the sin of his heart against greater light.

There are sins in name near akin to the very sin which the Chief Priests brought upon themselves on this day, in condemning the innocent blood—sins of such fearful name, that we shrink from imagining that we might incur the guilt of them, and which we do not know how to pronounce exactly what they are, and wherein they consist. But all of them have this in common, that they arise out of carelessness and profaneness towards the majesty, and holiness, and undiscerned presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, behaving towards holy things wickedly. There is a “sin against the HOLY GHOST”—there is a sin of “not discerning the LORD’S Body”—there is a sin of “crucifying the SON of GOD afresh, and putting HIM to open shame”—there is a sin of “treading under foot the SON of GOD,” and “counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing”—there is a sin of “quenching and doing despite unto the SPIRIT of grace.” I do not mean now to speak of what these sins may be, as to forms in which they might at this day appear: I only mention them to remind you, that, shocking as was the guilt of the Chief Priests, who crucified our LORD, their hardness of heart, hypocrisies, and covetousness, (and remember, these sinful dispositions of their hearts being uncorrected, paved the way for their great sin,) Christians may incur a guilt like theirs. It is well that we remember this in our Good Friday meditations. And let us all say inwardly, each for himself, and all one for another; From all such grievous sins, “from all blindness of heart, from pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy, and specially from all hardness of heart and contempt of Thy word and commandment, good LORD, deliver us.”

May HE who died for us, as on this day, and still intercedes for us at the right hand of GOD,—may HE pardon us those sins whose true guilt we know not, when we do them, even though that ignorance be brought upon us by our own faults; and may we learn at His Cross such heavenly tempers of meekness, compassion, brotherly love, and considerateness for one another, that we may, through His grace and merits, at last receive a place in His kingdom, who is “the FATHER of all mercies, and GOD of all comfort.”

SERMON CXXIV.

OUR LORD'S COMPASSION TOWARDS THE PENITENT THIEF.

PREACHED ON EASTER EVE.

JOHN vi. 37.

“Him that cometh to ME, I will in no wise cast out.”

THERE is one person, to whom our Blessed SAVIOUR showed lovingkindness in this season of His Passion, of whom, as yet, I have made no mention : one for whom HE was mindful, and upon whose heart HE wrought wonderfully and savingly in His darkest hour, even on the Cross, to whom HE vouchsafed the very greatest act of mercy, I believe, recorded in the Gospel as announced by HIM to any person. That person was the penitent thief. You may have expected that I should have spoken of him before. For, indeed, it is the mightiest and most signal instance of our LORD's free grace and mercy : the penitent thief being the only one of all Christians, concerning whom we are certified, by express assurance of GOD's Word, that he found an entrance into His kingdom.

I reserved it for the last, because, in order of time, it occurred the last, and because it seems to display the power and grace of the Cross, and of HIM, who hung upon it, in such sort as no sorrowful, burdened penitent should ever cast away hope.

Yet I do not pass on to speak of it without some feeling of backwardness. For in one view of the case of the penitent thief —I mean regarded simply with respect to the lateness of his con-

version—it has a bearing upon the subject of very late, what are called, death-bed repentances. And there is the fear, lest, in speaking without due thoughtfulness and caution, something should be said, either, on the one side, so as to minister to presumption and false security, or, on the other, so as to take away hope, where rather it needs to be confirmed and encouraged.

But, first, let us review the Gospel narrative of what took place. “And with HIM (we read) they crucify two thieves, the one on His right hand, the other on His left. And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.” These companions in our LORD’s sufferings, it would appear from St. Matthew and St. Mark, both of them, even while hanging on either side of JESUS, joined in the reproaches which the Chief Priests were casting out against HIM. But very soon there was a great change. For one of them, deeply impressed by our LORD’s whole demeanour in their common sufferings on the way to the place of crucifixion, and by the words of prayer he had heard HIM utter for His murderers, and perhaps by what passed in Pilate’s judgment-hall (as Pilate himself had been), and at the same time softened by his own afflictions, and brought to a full consciousness of his own evil deeds, underwent a blessed change, and came to a better mind.

The account of what passed afterwards is given only by St. Luke. And from his narrative it would rather appear as if the penitent had not taken part in the revilings of his companion in guilt and punishment. “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on HIM, saying, If THOU be CHRIST, save Thyself and us.” Perhaps it is the better way to understand both the accounts as strictly true, but referring to different times. St. Matthew and St. Mark, speaking of what both the thieves did at first—St. Luke, of what took place after they had been hanging some time, when observation of our LORD’s whole behaviour, and his own sufferings, and reflections upon his own case, had wrought a change in the heart of one of them. Then afterwards “the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” “From which words it is evident that he had known something before of our Blessed LORD, of the circumstances of

His condemnation, or something else, which assured him of our LORD's innocence." Then the Evangelist proceeds: "And he said unto JESUS, LORD, remember me when THOU comest into Thy kingdom. And JESUS said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with ME in paradise." Behold the riches of GOD's grace and mercy, who first by His inward working puts it into the heart to cry unto HIM, and then is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve. The penitent asked only remembrance, when CHRIST should enter into His kingdom, and the LORD granted him an immediate place in it. "*To-day* shalt thou be with ME in Paradise."

Thus to the end did our Blessed LORD display His compassion and lovingkindness, thus did HE place opportunity of good in the way of all, who were brought near to HIM, and graciously and considerately, even in the midst of all the circumstances of His Passion, measure out their portions to each in various ways, according to their several capacities for profiting. If they employed what HE set before them, their eyes even then might have been opened to the things, which belonged unto their peace. Thus did HE deal very mercifully as well towards the rebellious city and her children, towards Pilate, towards the Chief Priests, and even towards Judas, as towards His Apostles, and Peter in particular, and lastly, in this crowning act of sovereign mercy towards the penitent thief. Fit accompaniment to the great work of love which HE was hastening to fulfil, were His dealings towards these several parties: very fit that GOD's very work of perfect love should be ministered to, at every step in the way to its completion, by exercises of the same Divine temper in all imaginable forms: very fit that as the great concluding mercy was for all, so should there have been acts of mercy going before towards all, yea, even towards those who, "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, refused to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely¹."

But I observed, that our Blessed LORD measured out their portions to each, according to the aptness of each to lay hold on and profit by that, which was offered. And as in the case of the penitent thief, the mercy shown surpasses any recorded in the Gospel, it is

¹ Psalm lviii. 4, 5.

well that we have his case clearly before us, lest we suffer its comfort and encouragement to minister to presumption and false hope.

His case has been thus described by the writer already often quoted. "In the depth of our LORD's extreme humiliation, when even the disciples had fled, and doubted, and denied, and the beloved disciple alone of all the world been found faithful, the penitent thief showed in this instance a combination of humility, charity, faith, and fear of God, such as indicated a thorough conversion of heart ; a state of mind, which was marked by these qualities in the highest degree. At a time when, to worldly eyes, the KING and the Kingdom appear so utterly beyond acceptance and belief, as to be a matter of scorn and ridicule, this penitent acknowledged HIM as his LORD, and his KING, as one having power to save from death. Our LORD was set before him, not in His miracles, not in His authoritative teaching, not as pointed out by prophecies, not as proclaimed by the Great Forerunner. But as HE had said to Pilate, that he who was of the truth would hear His voice, so is HE known to this penitent thief, and acknowledged ; acknowledged too by a confession almost beyond every other acknowledgment during our LORD's life. The spiritual nature of His kingdom is acknowledged, His heavenly kingship : He is not only acknowledged but defended, when all the world is against HIM, and no other is found to maintain His cause. Here is humble confession of unworthiness, "we receive the due reward of our deeds," and "he that confesseth his sins shall find mercy." Here is reverential fear of God expressed, and acknowledgment of His judgments, "dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly?" and "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Here is love to man shown in concern for the other thief ; love to God in submission to His judgments, and in defending CHRIST ; and "charity shall cover the multitude of sins." Here is faith of the highest kind attributing the power to perform : and hope of the highest kind, that looks to nothing less than a heavenly Kingdom. And as the first to enter into Paradise with CHRIST, he is perhaps set forth as an example of that temper, which is required of all, who would enter there. For he has most attained unto Evangelical righteousness, who is the most thoroughly penitent, the most truly humbled."

Some have thought, that the case of the penitent thief is in all its parts so peculiar, that it is not safe to draw any conclusions in respect of the Divine mercies towards great offenders, who turn to GOD very late : for that the like occasion for holy dispositions so exemplarily shown never can precisely occur. But it seems a juster and a better view, to believe that no word or act of our Blessed LORD—and especially at such a time—can have emptied its force and meaning upon any one individual, or set of persons. And good men, the best instructed in GOD's holy Word, in all ages, have not feared to speak of it as a most merciful token for the encouragement of all penitents, whenever turning to GOD. One such writer has in these few words set forth what seems the safest and best conclusion to be drawn from this most wonderful conversion. "One sinner is converted at the hour of death, therefore hope ; and but one, therefore fear²."

There are a few comforting remarks in respect of GOD's dealings with men, about which doubting thoughts sometimes arise, which may have an appropriate place here. It is continually the case, that by protracted sickness, or accident, or old age, people's active powers are reduced to a state of uselessness. They seem to have been withdrawn from every purpose of life ; they become helpless in body, and enfeebled in mind, and seem as if nothing was left but to die. In this pause there may be opportunity for a great work within—the greatest and most important work of a whole life, if it be heartily grappled with, and to the best of the ability that remains. Much may go on *within*, which eye of man cannot mark, and which the tongue of him, in whom it is going on, cannot express and cannot judge of, or which in his humility and self-distrust he would not wish, or would fear, to express : while *outwardly* little can be done. The thief hung motionless upon the cross, and spoke but a few words, but within him the work of the saving of his soul went on. He practised humility—he confessed his sin—he allowed the justice of all he endured—he was patient—he reproved impenitence and profaneness in another—he preached CHRIST—he turned all his thoughts from earth heavenward—he acknowledged a power he did not see, which was by all around him set at nought and contemned—he placed his whole case in

² Quesnel.

CHRIST'S hands—he trusted all to HIM, and solely to His mercy. And since a bed of sickness, or old age, or other helplessness admit of the exercise of these acts; and since we cannot certainly pronounce upon how, and when, the work, of which these are but parts, may begin, or proceed, or terminate, let this teach us to look with other eyes (than many do) upon the case of persons, whom it pleases GOD to reduce to such condition, and so to lengthen out their days. Let it be without impatience, without indifference, with attention and watchfulness, as though we were gazing on some mysterious event in Divine Providence, the meaning of which we cannot penetrate. It may be that a work is being forwarded within, or even it may be that it has to be well nigh begun, in which GOD will be the doer and not man. GOD may bring the work of a life even into this narrow span of feebleness. “Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting GOD, the LORD, the CREATOR of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. HE giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might HE increaseth strength³.” What may be GOD'S purpose in lengthening out a life of helpless feebleness and suffering, it becomes us not to pronounce. Still less should we venture to pronounce that it is lengthened without purpose to the sufferer.

Thus I have endeavoured on these days to direct your thoughts towards the Cross and Sufferings of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and in such sort as to move our love towards HIM, for His great love towards us, particularly by tracing the forbearance, gentleness, mercy, and considerateness shown by HIM towards all, who were brought near to HIM, whether in love or enmity, and who took part in the proceedings of these days. And in what HE showed towards them, we may read His continued lovingkindness and forbearance towards us.

May we carry away some good thought or resolution with us, from the reflections, in which we have been engaged. Would they might assist any one towards a habit of frequent meditation on subjects in our Blessed LORD'S life in the flesh, but specially on the mysteries of His Cross and Passion. Neither will they have been without purpose, if there be one

³ Isa. xl. 28, 29.

single person return home with thoughts like some of those, who had seen all that was done at the place of Crucifixion. Like the Centurion's, who confessed, " Truly this was the Son of God : " or like those of the people, who in silence smote their breasts and returned, heavy at heart and serious, because of all that they had seen and heard : or like those of the women who returned home to make preparation to bear a part in His Burial. The spices and ointments, which they prepared, betoken uncorruptness from sin as our preparation : thus, by mortifying evil and corrupt affections, we may be buried with HIM, so that at last we may pass through the grave and gate of death to a joyful resurrection. And as this preparation of theirs was in order, that they might return early to the sepulchre, where HE lay, so may we daily approach to be near HIM, by every day meditating awhile on His life and death : so may we daily prepare for this approach the clean linen cloth of a pure heart, the myrrh and aloes of the mortified and self-denying virtues of a holy life, which, like spices and ointments, send forth a sweet perfume. And the more diligently we make these preparations, the more confidently may we hope that HE will be always near to us both in life and death ; and that those Blessed Hands stretched forth unto a disobedient and gain-saying people will not be closed against us.

SERMON CCXV.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

PREACHED ON EASTER-DAY.

1 COR. v. 7, 8.

“CHRIST our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

THE careful readers and hearers of the Prayer-book must have observed, that on this one great day the Holy Church begins praising God with a different hymn from that which she commonly uses. Every other morning in the year, when we rise from our knees after the LORD's Prayer, the appointed Psalm is that which begins, “Oh come, let us sing unto the LORD.” But on the morning of Easter-day, we are directed, as you know, to repeat an anthem out of those parts of St. Paul's Epistles, where he most expressly praises God for the glorious Resurrection of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Now these anthems, when we examine them, will be found to convey the same sort of instruction, in regard of this day's solemn service, as the Psalm, “O come, let us sing unto the LORD,” supplies us with in regard of the service of ordinary days. The purpose of the Church in fixing on that Psalm, was to warn Christians of the great danger we all lie under of hardening our hearts, becoming worse instead of better, if we come to worship God without really purposing to obey HIM. Her purpose in choosing the anthem you heard this

morning, is to warn you in like manner how to keep Easter without bringing a judgment upon yourselves.

For, indeed, whether we think of it or no, these solemn times and yearly memorials of the great things God has done for us, are very trying times to us all; times in which HE, as it were, comes nearer to us than usual; times which never can pass away as though they had never been; but of which the remembrance will rise up with us at the great day, either to our praise or our condemnation. Nobody, not the most ignorant person in this or in any other congregation, can well help knowing so much as this: That Easter is a very great day, a time in which people are called on to very serious thoughts of the world to come. Knowing this, if they know no more, they will be self-condemned by and by, if they suffer these precious hours to pass unimproved away.

As to the best way of considering our LORD'S Resurrection, now on His own glorious day, the Church in this anthem seems to take the following order: she represents to us the great things which happened to HIM as at this time, His Sufferings, Death, Burial, and Resurrection; these things the Church represents as the great event to which God has respect in all His dealings with sinful men, whether past, present, or to come. For the first of the three anthems which she has selected looks back to the past time, to the feast of the Passover, the Jewish Easter, "CHRIST our Passover, is sacrificed for us."

The second describes the present condition of Christian men, as such; the condition into which we are brought by the Resurrection of our LORD. "CHRIST being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over HIM:" so we are to "reckon ourselves as dead unto sin," that is, freed from its power and dominion; "and alive unto God," that is, enabled by His Spirit to serve HIM.

The third part of the Divine hymn shows us how the Resurrection of our SAVIOUR is meant to help us in looking forward to the future; how it is a pledge and token, quite sure to be fulfilled in its time, of our rising again to judgment. "CHRIST is risen from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept."

Now, whichever of these three anthems we take,—whether we look on our Easter Feast as being to us what the Passover was to

the Jews in times past ; or as the pledge of GOD's present grace and help offered to us as baptized Christians ; or as the sure earnest of the Resurrection of the dead, and of eternal life or death ;—any way we cannot but hear the voice of GOD teaching us to lead a new life by the very return of this day.

Let us first look back on the Old Testament, and consider what Christians may learn by comparing their Easter when it returns, with times long since passed away. The great event in the history of former days, to which the Resurrection of our LORD answered, was the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. For the whole Jewish nation, to which GOD's promises had been handed down from Abraham, was so far a Type or Figure of His Blessed SON, with and through whom all His Promises and Covenants are made. The affliction of the Jews under Pharaoh was like what our LORD endured, when as our surety HE remained three days in bondage under the power of death. The redemption of the people of GOD from Egypt, like our Redemption by our SAVIOUR CHRIST JESUS, depended on two things ; first, the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, and then the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. Our SAVIOUR's death answered to the first of these, and the overthrow of Satan's power by His Resurrection to the second.

As to the first, that CHRIST is indeed our Passover, the very Paschal Lamb offered for the sins of the world, by the sprinkling of whose precious Blood GOD is moved to spare sinners, the objects of nothing but wrath and damnation ; this we are most expressly taught, not only by St. Paul here in the text, but also by St. John in the history of our LORD's Crucifixion. For he says, that GOD's Providence ordered things so, that when the two malefactors' legs were broken, the same was not done to our SAVIOUR ; whereby, he adds, the Scripture was fulfilled, which ordained concerning the Paschal lamb, "a bone of HIM shall not be broken." Indeed, as often as HE is called the Lamb of GOD, the same great truth appears to be taught ; we are instructed to depend on HIM only, and on the sprinkling of His Blood for deliverance from the wrath and destroying Angels of GOD. And for the same reason HE showed HIMSELF to St. John in the Revelations under the figure of the Lamb that had been slain. Now as GOD's

acceptance of this Paschal sacrifice was made known by His delivering the Israelites, and bringing the Red Sea upon Pharaoh ; so His acceptance of our SAVIOUR'S Sacrifice, offered once for all upon the Cross, was made known by His rising the third day from the dead. This seems to be what St. Paul means, when he says concerning CHRIST, that "having spoiled Principalities and Powers" (*i.e.* the evil spirits of darkness),—having deprived them of us, their prey,—"HE made a show of them openly, triumphing over them by His Cross." His returning as HE did victorious from the grave, was the surest proof before men and angels of the devil's power being humbled, and the sting of death overcome. You see, then, that both in His sufferings and His victory, our Divine MASTER fulfilled the image, which GOD had caused to be drawn, as it were, of HIM, so many hundred years before.

But the text was clearly intended to remind us of another most remarkable instance of typical agreement, and one in which we are ourselves most nearly concerned. It was intended to point out to all Christians, not only the power of our LORD'S death to redeem them, but also the manner in which they must apply that healing power and virtue each one to himself. It shows how CHRIST is to be made a Passover, or Paschal Lamb, to each of us sinners in particular. For it is plain from Holy Scripture, that it is not enough, His being offered once for all to bear the sins of the whole world. Still something or other must be done by or for each one in particular, before he can be a partaker in that benefit. What that something is, the mysterious institution of the Passover shows plainly enough, to those who will compare it with what they find in the Gospel. The Paschal lamb was like other peace-offerings. The way to communicate in the benefit of it, was to partake of it in the Paschal feast. Whoever neglected so to do, forfeited the blessing intended him thereby ; that soul was to be cut off from God's people, as having broken His Covenant. And before, when the destroying Angel came to slay the first-born of the Egyptians, it was not enough for the lamb to be sacrificed, but it was also necessary that the blood should be sprinkled on the door of each house of the chosen people. A clear sign how necessary it would be, when the Great Sacrifice of all was offered, to have some way for each person to take it to himself and make

it his own. In a word, when we read of these things, we are taught by our SAVIOUR HIMSELF what to think of. "Except ye eat the Flesh of the SON of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." We must in some awful and mysterious way be made One with our Blessed Redeemer by eating His Flesh, and drinking His Blood; else that Blood, all-sufficient as it is, will not avail to our salvation. The Flesh and Blood of the SON of Man is as necessary to our spiritual life, as visible meat and drink to our bodily life. And in this sense, especially, HE is our Paschal Lamb, in that HE is not only sacrificed for us, but we are to keep the Feast by partaking of HIM; at the peril, if we do not, of being cut off from GOD's people, and accounted to have broken His Covenant.

Now, can this awful and blessed Communion with CHRIST, which is indeed eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, can it be had any other way than by partaking of the Blessed Sacrament? Certainly, I know of nothing in the whole Scripture which gives us any encouragement to think so. "Except ye eat the Flesh of the SON of Man, and drink His Blood," said our LORD to the Jews of His time, "ye have no life in you." And a very few months after, HE gave the Blessed Bread and Wine to His Disciples with these very words: "This is My Body which is given for you: this is My Blood of the New Testament, shed for you and for many." Is it not as if HE had said, "This is that Flesh and Blood of Mine, of which I told you some while since?" Could they who received it possibly help understanding, that now they were to receive that very Flesh and Blood which had been promised them as the only means of spiritual life?

I do not see how any faithful Christian, seriously considering what is told us of our LORD's will, can reckon himself to be a partaker of His blessed Body and Blood, as long as he refuses this Divine and comfortable Sacrament. And if he have no good reason to account himself a receiver of CHRIST's Body and Blood, how can he have any comfort or tranquillity of mind, seeing that the words are so express, that without such eating and drinking he can have no life in him? If you really believe the Bible, you must believe this to be exactly true. And believing it, can you help wishing, at least, to be a worthy partaker of this holy Sacrament?

If you really wish this, will you not seriously attend to what St. Paul next teaches, of the manner in which Easter is to be kept, and the holy Body and Blood of CHRIST to be received? This, I say, he teaches, as he had what went before, by a reference to the Jews' Passover. "Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The appointed preparation for the Jews on the point of keeping their Passover, was putting away leaven out of their houses. For seven whole days they were to eat only unleavened bread. In the first instance, this was meant to remind them of the haste with which God brought them out of Egypt, when they took their dough before it was leavened. But it had also this other meaning: that in preparing to receive JESUS CHRIST, sacrificed for the sins of the world, men should labour, and strive, and pray, to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. For that is the old leaven of which the Apostle here makes mention; the corrupt nature and bad habits of men, filling them full of malice and wickedness. This, by the grace of ALMIGHTY GOD, must be in a way to be amended and removed; they must be sincerely endeavouring to obtain a new heart and a right spirit, and then they will be fit to keep the feast of Easter; then GOD, in His infinite mercy, will account them, however imperfect, worthy to receive the Bread of Life.

I fear that there are not many of us, who are used to go at all deeply into this thought of our own corruption. We all own it readily enough; we say, "of course we are wicked, as other people are:" and then we go on, well satisfied with ourselves, as if we had no great work to do, no pressing danger to avoid. But how would it be, if instead of this old leaven of sin, it were some painful or loathsome distemper—the plague, or the leprosy, or some malignant fever,—of which we found the seeds in our constitution, and knew that, if neglected, it would break out by and by, but if taken in time, might be thoroughly and effectually cured? Should we then say, Of course we are infected, but so are a great many more; we will not take any trouble to cure ourselves? No; we should most of us be anxious and busy in seeking out the best remedies. At least, when we began to feel the pain, we should look out for help in earnest, however negli-

gent we might have been before. Well indeed is it for those who begin to be uneasy about themselves; who are no longer able to quiet their consciences by the saying that sin is a matter of course, and "every child of Adam is corrupt." Well is it for you, when, on reading or hearing of a world gone astray from God, you feel the thought come home to yourself, that "you are one of that evil world, and what have you done that you should be delivered from its curse?" Well is it for you, when your heart is touched, to compare what you read or hear with the particulars of your own thoughts, words, and actions, and to acknowledge and ascertain how frightfully and how far they are all leavened with habitual sin. As soon as you are seriously aware of this—I do not say as soon as you *feel* it, as soon as you are able to *talk* about it—but as soon as you are calmly, deeply, thoughtfully, aware of your own great sinfulness and danger, you will naturally strive in earnest to amend; you will not bear the thought of what you must be in the sight of the God of all purity; you will begin to pray heartily, not only for pardon through the Blood of our REDEEMER, but also for the grace of His Holy Spirit, to obey HIM better in time to come. According to St. Paul's way of speaking in the text, when you have found on examination of your own thoughts, words, and actions, how very few of them, if any, are such as God is likely to approve, when you have found in them all, without exception, the bitter taste of the old leaven, then you will begin by His help to purge it out. But as long as you are contented with a mere general acknowledgment, or with talking bitterly about your sinfulness, and about poor fallen human nature, you will but be just where you are, or worse.

Now among the particulars in thought, word, and action, which most betray the old fatal leaven, St. Paul mentions here malice and wickedness; which word "wickedness" in this place seems to mean properly 'fraud and cunning.' What if you try yourself, seriously and fairly, with respect to these two?

First as to malice. It is the commonest thing in the world to hear people say, they do not bear malice, they owe no man any ill will. It seems to be the first thing that comes into their minds, when any thing happens to remind them of their last account. And they comfort themselves, I fear, a little sooner

than they ought, with the notion of their being free from malice.

For consider under what circumstances such professions are commonly made. Something or other has happened to alarm a person, and make him rather more serious than usual; some sickness or other affliction is on him, and God's minister, or some good friend, warns him of what is to come hereafter. At such a time, whatever uncharitable dispositions he may have, are little likely to be present to his mind; then, if ever, he will feel softened; and if he think at all of those whom he has ever disliked, will seem to himself as if he thoroughly forgave them. But this is but feeling, and may be but fancy. When the man recovers from the sickness, when the sorrow passes away, then comes the real practical trial; then it is known by deeds, not words only, whether the malice be gone or no. That is the kind of proof you must look to, and not be satisfied with your feeling at the moment as if you had no uncharitable thought.

Malice, that is, ill nature, envy, grudging, is, as St. Paul here hints, like leaven: it is a subtle thing, mingling itself with many parts of men's conduct, where they little suspect it themselves. For example: you hear a neighbour praised for something on which you are apt to value yourself. Ask your own conscience fairly: do you feel no sort of pang, no jealousy or envy, at this? Is it not too plain, that we are most of us inclined to repine at our neighbour's getting things which we think we might as well have had ourselves? Now, whatever you may judge of it, this is the leaven of malice, and must be purged out; must be seriously repented of, and prayed against, if you would come worthily to the holy Table.

So in respect of that other kind of wickedness of which the great Apostle warns us,—fraud, falsehood, cunning, insincerity. It is what people generally can least endure to be charged with: to call a man a liar is the bitterest of all affronts: and those who would confess many faults will search far and wide, and invent all sorts of excuses, rather than plead guilty to this. And many seem to think, that if they affirm no direct falsehood, they are sufficiently purged from this sin; but surely they judge too hastily: there is a leaven of cunning as well as of malice, which is apt to mingle with all our conduct, and poison and infect it, and make it unworthy of God, to a degree far

beyond what we can imagine, till we have really watched and tried ourselves. We get into mean, pitiful habits, of setting traps for our own praise; of contriving to take the best of every thing for ourselves; of getting off in all business with less than our share of expense, or trouble, or ill will. This is the leaven of selfish cunning, so worked into the daily behaviour of most men, that they are not themselves at all aware of it: they never, of course, dream of repenting of it.

By these two examples of malice and of cunning, we see how vain it is for people to talk and think highly of their own innocence, in any part of their conduct whatever. They could not do so, if they had any thing like a right understanding either of the Bible or of their own hearts and lives. The more diligently they compare the Word of GOD with their own daily conduct, the more faults they are sure to find. When, therefore, in examining yourself before the Holy Communion, you find your conscience, as you think, clear on this or that point, the safest way, perhaps, is to follow the example of St. Paul, who in such a case says of himself, "I know nothing against myself, but HE that judgeth me is the LORD: therefore I judge not mine own self." The safest way is, to be quite sure, that if we were better men than we are,—more humble and watchful, more experienced in true self-denial,—we should perceive many faults in ourselves where now all seems to us right; and being sure of this, to humble ourselves accordingly, and cry with David earnestly and sincerely, "O cleanse THOU me from my secret faults!"

On the other hand, how many and how grievous soever the transgressions and bad tendencies we find in our past conduct, it ought not to discourage nor keep us from the Holy Communion, provided we have sincerely entered on the task of purging out that evil leaven. The bread which we are required to have in our houses, in order to partake of the Paschal Lamb worthily, is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The sincere endeavour to please our SAVIOUR in future HE will accept, so great is His mercy, instead of unsinning obedience in times past. Let this then be the great object of your prayers to GOD'S Almighty Spirit, that HE would, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake, make you true and sincere in serving HIM. Pray to HIM to make you sincere in your prayers, and watch withal, that your actions do not give the

lie to your words, and prayers, and professions, and even your feelings. When you find that by the blessing of God you are actually getting into a way of doing right things that are unpleasant to you, and refraining from pleasant sins, and all for JESUS CHRIST'S sake, then come humbly yet cheerfully to His altar for grace to help you in that good way. Surely, if persevered in, it will prove the way of everlasting life.

S E R M O N C C X V I .

CHRIST OUR RESURRECTION FROM SIN.

PREACHED ON EASTER MONDAY.

ROMANS vi. 10, 11.

“ In that HE died, HE died unto sin once : but in that HE liveth, HE liveth unto GOD. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.”

THE second part of the Church's Easter Anthem, (the beginning of which I tried to explain yesterday,) relates to the time present. It is St. Paul's account of what our SAVIOUR now is, and what we ought to be. Our SAVIOUR is once for all delivered from death, immortal and glorious in heaven with His FATHER. We, therefore, are to consider ourselves as once for all freed from the bonds and dominion of sin ; enabled, by GOD's grace, to serve HIM faithfully. “ CHRIST being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over HIM. For in that HE died, HE died unto sin once : but in that HE liveth, HE liveth unto GOD. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.”

So much of this Divine sentence as relates to our LORD and SAVIOUR, we are ready enough to receive and acknowledge. That HE rose from the dead, and is gone up into Heaven, never to die any more, but to reign in bliss with His FATHER for ever and ever, this the Scripture tells us plainly, and we find no difficulty in believing it. But the lesson, the instruction, which the holy Apostle draws from this truth, is by no means so easy

to be received. Because CHRIST is glorified in Heaven, we are to reckon ourselves dead unto sin. Because HE never can die any more, GOD and His Church expect of us, that we should not pollute ourselves by wilful habitual sin. How is that? If it were not in the Scripture, I make no doubt it would seem to many at first sight like a kind of pleasant dream, a mere imagination of well-disposed persons, knowing nothing at all of the world. Dead to sin! and alive to GOD only! How does such language agree with the ordinary course of things around us, with the conduct and temper of the Christian world?

No doubt, things go on better than they would if the Gospel had never been known. The world is a much more comfortable world to live in, than it would be if our SAVIOUR had never appeared in it. But still, looking at the ordinary sort of Christians, and considering the temptations they are placed in, is it not throwing words away to talk of such complete repentance, such thorough change of heart, as must be meant by a death unto sin? Would it not be better to take a lower tone, and ask people for something more likely to be obtained from them? Is it not throwing them into despair, when the state and condition of a Christian is described as something so very much more perfect than any thing we really see or experience?

Such is the way in which many persons would speak, if they dared, of the high language of Scripture; such is the censure which they really do pass on those who try to bring Scripture home to them, and speak to them in earnest of Christian perfection. They turn a deaf ear to such instructions, saying, It is more than human nature will bear. It is plain that they say one thing, and the Bible and the Church say just the contrary. These persons say, It is in vain to demand great things of mortal man, pent up in a frail body, and encompassed with the wants and cares of the world. The Bible and the Church say, (and they do but repeat the words of our SAVIOUR and of His HOLY SPIRIT,) "Be ye perfect as your FATHER in Heaven is perfect: You are dead to sin; how should you live any longer therein?"

Now, every Christian can judge for himself, whether it must not be much safer to take GOD at His own word, however contrary it may seem to the way of the world, than to bend and

lower and pervert the Scriptures in accommodation to that world, acknowledged as it is to be corrupt and in enmity with GOD. You must see, that if the Bible says, A Christian as such is dead to sin, so it must be, in spite of objections and difficulties; and you ought, in spite of temptations and misgivings, to try and behave as if it were so.

What I mean will be better understood, if I try to show the exact meaning of this expression, "dead to sin." And it is the more desirable to do so, as the expression is found in the Church Catechism. The spiritual grace of Baptism is there said to be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." What is this death unto sin?

According to St. Paul's manner of speaking, a man is said to be dead to a thing, when he is quite cut off and separated from it, so that it is a matter not to be thought of, for him any longer to act or behave as if he had any concern with that thing. Thus he says, in one place, he was dead to the law of Moses; meaning that it was out of the question, his being any longer under the Jews' religion. And here, "CHRIST died once for all, to sin;" meaning, that at that awful moment of our LORD's expiring on the Cross, sin, that is, our sin laid upon HIM, ceased for ever to have dominion over HIM. Of the stain and guilt of sin HE never knew any thing, for HE was a Lamb without blemish and without spot; and from that moment HE knew no more of the punishment due to sin, which HE had endured in such bitterness for our sake. In a word, when HE died, HE died to sin.

And we, when we are baptized, are said also to die to sin: because we enter then into a condition, by which GOD intends to separate us from sin, and gradually to improve our nature, so that it shall be as much out of the question for us to sin wilfully, as for a dead body to do the actions of a living one. That by which GOD graciously purposes so to improve our fallen nature, is the gift of His HOLY SPIRIT: of which we know by His SON's own words that the water of Baptism is a lively and effectual sign. "For except a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD." Therefore Baptism is a death unto sin, because it seals to us the aid of that HOLY SPIRIT, sin's deadly and prevailing enemy, and puts men in a way, by His grace, to destroy and abolish the whole body of sin.

But if this be so, it is very plain that a baptized Christian is put into a state, which makes it utterly absurd for him ever to use the plea of natural infirmity, by way of excuse for bad habits or wilful sin. A Jew or a Heathen might say, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." A Christian, as a Christian, cannot, dare not, say so. When St. Paul used those words, he was showing how a Jew or a Heathen might speak: and in the very next sentence, he acknowledges God's mercy in having delivered him from that body of death. Let no baptized Christian imagine that he may go on meaning well and doing ill, and yet be as good as St. Paul was.

It is true, indeed, a baptized Christian, after continually grieving God's blessed SPIRIT, and inviting bad habits and evil spirits to make their abode in his heart, may feel as wretched and helpless as any Heathen: but he must not plead his wretchedness and helplessness as any kind of excuse for his sin, nor must he give way to the feeling of it, so as to slacken his endeavours to amend. As long as God gives him life and continues him in His Church, so long, depend on it, there is hope, let his feelings be never so wretched: only let him persevere night and day in real endeavours to amend his ways, real application to God for His grace. Let him not go by his feelings, but when he seems to himself coldest and most desolate, still let him cling, like a drowning man, to the promise made him in that Sacrament, and let him, with deep shame and humiliation, seek pardon through the CROSS of our REDEEMER. The blessed SPIRIT, however grieved, will not be deaf to such prayers. HE will return by little and little, and help such a penitent to amend his ways, and really and practically, in some good measure, to live like one dead unto sin.

But, I repeat it, if he continue hardened, or if he wilfully permit himself to relapse, let him not flatter himself that he is but where he would be, if he were a mere Heathen, ignorant of our SAVIOUR. CHRIST has HIMSELF settled that point. "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for those who knew HIM and repented not." A bad Christian is not a Heathen, but something a great deal worse, and more miserable. And if all Christians were bad together, this would not at all contradict the saying, that Christianity as such is dying to sin: it would not at all lessen our danger—the danger, I

mean, of each one of us in particular,—brought on us by our choosing to continue in wilful disobedience, and scorn of God's heavenly assistance.

It is sad to think, how very nearly the actual state of CHRIST'S Kingdom on earth is, as far as we are able to discern it, come to this last supposition ; that all Christians together are greatly fallen away. Very, very few, in comparison, seem to live in any measure answerably to their glorious privileges. Hence a whole world of error and mischief besetting the Church on every side ; divisions, scandals, false doctrines without end ; and all, or nearly all, plainly to be traced to the bad lives of those who know better, and are offered grace to do better. I will just mention now two sorts of errors in particular, into one or other of which, without true Christian watchfulness, you and all men are sure to fall, on comparing the Christian Scriptures with the lives and conversation of the generality of Christians.

The first and most obvious of these errors, and that which I fear the greater part of mankind give into, is turning away lightly from the whole subject, with some such thoughts as the following. “ I see, after all, the Bible cannot mean what it says ; it seems indeed to be very strict ; but the conduct of the whole Christian world shows that they do not so understand it. I cannot suppose they are all going wrong ; and, at all events, I shall not think of setting up to be wiser or better than they.” Such are people's thoughts, or rather their impressions, on beholding the fallen state of the Church ; they eagerly avail themselves of it to excuse their own bad passions, their own covetousness, sloth, or irreligion. Thus they hurry along the stream, and help in their turn to carry away others ; and so the sad prophecy of the Apostle is accomplished, “ Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

Nor is the matter much mended on the whole, though, doubtless, of the persons concerned we may and ought to judge more favourably, when we take into consideration the other set of errors, to which, as I was saying, corrupt Christians give occasion. Persons not light-minded, like those just men-

tioned, nor wholly swallowed up in worldly affairs, when they read, as in the text, of Christians being dead to sin, and compare it with what they see in the world, easily fall into the notion that the Christians, of whom such great things are spoken, the elect, the children of God, dead to sin and new born unto righteousness, cannot be the whole body of baptized persons, many of whom they see going on so ill. Those expressions, they soon come to think, must denote a favoured few, on whom God, for whatever reason, looks more kindly than on the rest. When men have once got this notion, especially if they are of a fanciful and restless turn, liking to hear and read strong words, and to have their fears and hopes eagerly excited;—or, again, if they are naturally proud, and like to set themselves up above others;—they are apt to dwell a good deal on the thought, who they are whom God thus highly favours; how they may be known from others; whether they are themselves of the number; with other imaginations of the same kind. The plain ordinary duties of common life are too apt to be forgotten or negligently performed, while they are wholly taken up with imaginations of this kind regarding themselves or others. The Holy Church, the Blessed Sacraments, the commissioned Ministers of our Divine MASTER, are slighted, as though HE had not given His word to be with them. Every man invents for himself, or takes from others who have invented for themselves, certain marks or tokens of God's peculiar favour, instead of abiding by the plain ordinances of Scripture, as interpreted by the Holy Universal Church. The end is strife, perplexity, confusion; one might almost say, every evil work. But the particular purpose for which I mentioned this sort of error at this time, was to show you how naturally it arises out of the bad conduct of those whom the Scriptures affirm to be dead unto sin. When baptized persons generally are careless of religion, how can it be expected that men will think worthily of baptism? They will judge by the event, however unreasonably; and God's most Holy Sacrament will be dishonoured, because we do not use the grace which HE most surely conferred on us there.

However, amidst all these dangers, we have, God be thanked, a safe way open before us. We have but to abide

simply and seriously by the rules which our conscience tells us we might have kept from our youth up, the plain rules of CHRIST and His Holy Church. His grace, duly sought in His own ordinances, will be sufficient for us; only let us not wander after novelties, nor ever deal lightly with sacred things.

SERMON CCXVII.

CHRIST OUR RESURRECTION FROM DEATH.

PREACHED ON EASTER TUESDAY.

I CORINTHIANS xv. 20.

“Now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and is become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

THIS is the third part of our Easter anthem; in which Holy Scripture teaches how we may learn of our LORD'S Resurrection to look forward to times future.

As HE is our Passover, sacrificed for us, we know the meaning of the old Jewish law: we see how, in times past, GOD prepared the way for our great deliverance by the Gospel.

As HE, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, we understand our own present condition, that we, being raised in Baptism from the death of sin, are henceforth enabled and expected to lead a new life after CHRIST'S pattern.

And now, lastly, as JESUS CHRIST was the first who rose from the dead, no more to return to corruption, we know for certain that we too shall rise again. HE is the firstfruits of them that sleep; which expression may be thus understood:—According to the Jewish law, on the Sunday of the week of the Passover, a sheaf of corn was to be solemnly offered up before GOD ALMIGHTY in His Tabernacle, as an acknowledgment of all His mercy, and a token of faith in HIM for ever. That sheaf was called the firstfruits, because it was the first sheaf of the harvest; the corn of the Jews being always ripe just about the time of the Passover. Now as this wave-sheaf was a kind of sample

of the coming harvest, so the Body of our crucified REDEEMER, raised from the dead, and taken up into heaven, there to appear in the presence of GOD for us,—this is a sure pledge and token of what is to happen to the faithful, when HE comes again to judge the world. It is a truth which ought to be well known to every one who has ever stood by and heard the Burial Service. “HE will change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working, whereby HE is able to subdue all things to HIMSELF.” And “if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with HIM.”

Observe, it is said, “them which sleep in JESUS;” just as St. Paul in the text affirms, that our LORD rising from the dead was made the Firstfruits of them that slept. It is the common word for death—at least, for the death of the righteous—in the New Testament. Such death is no more, even with respect to our bodies, than a long and sound sleep. We are sure to be waked from it; much more sure, than we are of waking in this world when we go to sleep in our beds. For many have died in that slumber; but they who lie down in the grave, whether bad or good, must rise again, all, without exception, in that dreadful unknown hour, when our LORD will appear to judge the world. They are not dead, but sleeping for awhile, just as HE might be called not dead, but asleep, during the hours of that day which passed between His expiring and rising again—the last day of Passion week.

This is true, even with regard to men’s bodies, which do lie senseless for a while, and decay: even they are, properly speaking, only asleep. But as to the soul, the undying spirit, breathed into them at first by ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF, we have reason from the Holy Scripture to believe, that it is not even asleep, during the time that it is parted from the body. We have reason to believe that good men’s souls depart immediately and are with CHRIST; as HE promised the repenting thief, “To-day shalt thou be with ME in Paradise:” and that the spirits of the impenitent have their own place too, where they lift up their eyes, being in torments. Surely it is an awful thought, that whilst we are busy about the grave, the spirit of the dead is awake in some unknown place, and already knows its eternal doom.

Now of these truths, whether awful or comfortable, our SAVIOUR'S Resurrection is the appointed seal and token. HE is the Firstfruits of them that slept—the beginning, the First-born from the dead. Not that HE is the only man, nor the first, whose soul, once departed, has been united again to the body by the mighty power of GOD: for this is true of those children whom Elijah and Elisha raised from the dead: it is true of the widow's son at Nain, and of Jairus' daughter, and especially of Lazarus, and of others since, who have been restored to life by the Eternal SPIRIT answering the prayers of His faithful Apostles and Martyrs. CHRIST is not, then, called the Firstfruits, because HE was the first or the only person raised from the dead, but because HE was the first and only one so raised, who returned no more to corruption. Lazarus, the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, and the rest, have all been long ago gathered to their fathers. They have died the common death of all men: their bodies have decayed as those of other persons. But HE whom GOD raised again, our SAVIOUR CHRIST, saw no corruption. HE left His grave within a very few hours, before decay could have begun there in the natural course of things; and HE never did nor can return to the grave again. HE first, by such a Resurrection as admitted of no death afterwards, was to give light to the people and to the Gentiles—to those who knew GOD, and to those who knew HIM not.

Now, most likely, all who listen to such discourses as this, think, without any hesitation, that they believe all this already. They think they believe in the Resurrection of our LORD, and also in the resurrection of their own bodies. And so, no doubt, they do believe, as far as mere words go. That is, when they say these words; "The third day HE rose again, according to the Scriptures;" and again, "I believe in the Resurrection of the body,"—when people say, they believe these things, they really do believe that something or other, which those words mean, is true. But it is not a steady considerate belief: they do not seriously put their minds to it. They believe, as did Martha, the sister of Lazarus, when she stood by her brother's grave, and heard our SAVIOUR saying to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." "I know," said Martha, "that he shall rise again at the Resurrection in the last day." She seemed to herself as if she had a

sound faith in this great article of the Resurrection. But what was the fact? When it came to the point, that something was actually to be done with a view to Lazarus's own resurrection, she seems to have been perplexed, and hesitates like an unbeliever. I mean, when they came to the grave, and our SAVIOUR commanded the stone to be taken away, which closed up the grave's mouth. Martha, not having collected and steady thoughts as to who our LORD was, and how distinctly HE had promised a resurrection, answered, as she might have done to any other friend who might have wished to see her brother in his tomb, "LORD, by this time he stinketh." It sounds as if she doubted for the moment, whether even GOD could do any thing, corruption having once begun.

Now, what reason have we to think that our faith in the Resurrection is more perfect than the faith of Martha, the sister of Lazarus? Is it not plainly all but impossible for any man to believe, seriously and thoughtfully, that his body shall rise again and be judged according to his works, without such belief making a great difference in his conduct? If no such difference appear, is it not plain that the belief in the mind, however sincere at first, has become very weak: too weak to do him any real good; too weak to control unruly passions, and brace the mind to hard and irksome duties?

We may try our faith in the Resurrection, either by our pains or by our pleasures.

Whenever we feel or fear bodily pain, this is GOD's warning to us, that we may not forget the pains that shall never end, the torments of those who for their obstinacy will be cast into hell-fire; not mere figures of speech, but real bodily torments: so Scripture gives us to understand. It will be well for those who, as far as they can, (they cannot always, for great pain and languor,) make their sufferings an occasion of religious fear. It is well if they begin to say seriously to themselves, "Here am I, unable to endure a raging tooth or a throbbing head; what if the vials of GOD's wrath were to be poured out on me? what if I were cast into the lake of fire?" In short, the arrows of ALMIGHTY GOD, whether they pierce the soul or body, or both, show HIM to be indeed Almighty over us; show how exactly HE knows our weak points. When we feel them, we naturally

fall down and humble ourselves before His Throne, who has at His command the stores of eternal wrath.

This, I say, would be natural, simple, and reasonable, for a plain man to do in his hours of bodily anguish, if he really were used to think much of his own part in our LORD'S Resurrection. But how do the generality take bodily pain? When they are sick, and in much suffering, are they not almost sure to say, "I wish and pray that GOD would take me?" Now, what does this wish and prayer mean? Too often one can only understand by it, that the person so praying has never seriously thought what it is to appear before GOD. Else, even for their bodies' sake, whose pains cause them to speak so, they would hardly dare wish themselves dead. For except you have a reasonable hope of dying in GOD'S favour through JESUS CHRIST, to wish yourself dead is wishing yourself in intolerable anguish of mind, waiting for the coming of the offended JUDGE to consign you for ever to intolerable torment of body. It is safer, therefore, and wiser, and more Christian in every way, instead of praying for a short time, because your bodily trials are severe, or other wants and inconveniences pressing—it is safer, I say, a great deal, to let GOD choose for you; only praying HIM not to take you until HE sees that you are really fit to go.

There is another very awful thought, which may reasonably occur in many cases, to those who suffer great bodily pain from disease. Too often such pains may be actually accounted for by some wicked habit or other—drunkenness, or surfeiting, or pining discontent, or this or that irregular passion. The disease, even in this world, follows the sin, and every body says it was natural and might have been expected. Now what if it should be found in the next world, that these same sinful indulgences prepared men's very bodies for the torments of hell, as undoubtedly as they prepare them in this world for the miseries of sickness? What if those first pains and loathings, caused by surfeiting, for example, or drunkenness, be a kind of specimen or pattern of the intemperate man's portion in the world that is to come? only that, of course, this latter when it does come will be infinitely worse than the former? Still it is what one may conceive, that the one is a kind of token or earnest of the other. At any rate, the sufferings you bring on yourself by wickedness, be they light or heavy, yet so far as they are real, are a pledge of GOD'S anger

against you for that wickedness—of that anger which none can resist. I repeat it; pain and languor, caused by intemperance, is as sure a mark of your JUDGE'S displeasure, as if HE called to you from Heaven, in the world's hearing and yours, "Drunkenness, revellings, and such like, are works of the flesh: they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Thus far I have considered one great religious use of bodily pain: its putting reasonable men often in mind of God's anger against sin, and of the very element in which sinners as such must expect to dwell for ever,—pain and torment without relief. Now, on the other hand, let something be said of bodily pleasures, in the same way of thinking; how they appear to a considerate Christian, having his mind full of the Resurrection of the body.

First, then, innocent and moderate pleasures, even those of the body itself, are, without question, to be thankfully received by CHRIST'S servants, not only as gifts from God in themselves, but also as pledges of His love, and so far, tokens of good things to come. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer." So St. Paul teaches, speaking of diverse kinds of meats, which, being sanctified by the Word of God, that is, having God's blessing upon them, are, so far, signs and tokens of His love: something for the mind to rest on when tempted to mistrust or weariness; something to make you ashamed, if you are growing discontented and unthankful.

Take, for example, the enjoyment most men naturally have, at some time or other of their lives, in beholding the glorious works of God: the sun rising or setting, the moon walking in brightness; flowers, trees, herbs, growing or decaying; animals at play; the fresh air; the sports of children; music; and a thousand other things, which, however common they may be, and however mixed up, some of them, with bodily sensations, are undoubtedly to be taken as gifts from HIM, whose least gift is infinitely precious; and are, so considered, as little drops or crumbs, fallen as it were under the heavenly table. Many such occasions there are, on which it would be wrong to say much, but it cannot be wrong to feel deeply and thankfully that the very slightest enjoyment we have, a pleasant gleam of sunshine, or a quarter of an hour's quiet sleep, is far more

than a sinner can deserve ; is indeed one of the ten thousand reasons, of which the world is every where full, for thanking God our merciful REDEEMER, and taking courage to do all our duty.

On the other hand, it is certain, by sad experience, that if people take no care thus to mingle the thought of God with their pleasures, those pleasures, however innocent in themselves, will prove to them guilty and mischievous ; for they will drive out holy and serious thoughts, and make men less and less willing to serve their REDEEMER with a pure heart. Gross, sensual, bodily enjoyments, are part of our frail nature and imperfect condition here in this world of trial ; there will be an end of them when we go out of the world ; and, therefore, those who depend much on them are sure to find themselves unprepared for Heaven. For instance, while we have these “ bodies of vileness ” (so St. Paul calls them), we cannot help being hungry and thirsty ; we, of course, have pleasure in meat and drink ; but there is no reason at all to think that such infirmities, or such pleasures, will find any place in the world to come. Again, hear our BLESSED SAVIOUR : “ The children of this world marry and are given in marriage : but they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the Resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage : neither can they die any more : for they are like unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the Resurrection.” Is it not plain that for such a state they will be found little provided, who have given their whole hearts and minds to such cares and pleasures as most easily engage and win the natural man ; who go on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the very day when the SON of Man is revealed ; or (which is the same thing to them) until the day that God calls them out of the world ? Depend upon it, bodily pleasures, the best of them, are dangerous and deceiving, and ought to be sparingly and fearfully indulged in. David is a sad instance of this. If he had been more on his guard, more severe and watchful over his own heart, in those enjoyments which were not sinful, he would not, it is likely, have fallen so shamefully, when sinful desire and opportunity came.

Even with regard to those pleasures which are not so properly to be called sensual ;—for example, with regard to good health, which is in fact a continual course of moderate and gentle bodily

enjoyment;—though men cannot be too thankful for them, yet it is well for them to be aware, that neither can they well be too watchful. They have reason to fear, lest their flow of spirits, and even way of enjoying themselves, day after day, and week after week, tempt them gradually away from their SAVIOUR, and make them feel as if they had need of nothing. I say, to those who have good health and keen spirits are more especially addressed those texts of Scripture, which call on men to deny and mortify themselves. GOD has not as yet begun to warn them, by pain or weakness, how frail they are. So much the more need have they to provide themselves warnings from time to time; by fasting and other acts of secret self-denial, by waiting on sick beds, and on persons in pain, by much and deep remembrance of the sufferings and martyrdom of the Saints; and, above all, by representing to themselves our Blessed SAVIOUR tormented on the Cross. These thoughts are good for the afflicted, in order to make them ashamed of repining; and surely they are not less, but if possible more necessary, for the healthy and strong; not only that they may have compassion on their brethren, but also that they may learn to fear GOD's wrath, and those dreadful pains which await sinful bodies hereafter.

I am well aware how strange it seems, to young persons especially, to be called away from their enjoyments, how simple and innocent soever, and bidden to deny themselves, to wait on those who are in pain and want, to fix their imaginations on the torments of martyrs, and on the Cross of our LORD and SAVIOUR. But let them seriously consider one thing. They kneel down every day of their lives (else they are not Christians at all) to recommend themselves to ALMIGHTY GOD by prayer in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to ask His pardon and the gift of His HOLY SPIRIT. Now which do they find suits best with their prayers: the diversions of which they are so fond, or these thoughts of pain, and sickness, and the Cross, which it seems to them strange to be reminded of? Again, which of the two do they think are most like the thoughts and meditations of our Blessed SAVIOUR? We never read of His joining in any diversion; but we know that HE spent His life in self-denial, and in waiting on those who were in pain and sickness. You cannot seriously doubt that His rule of life was the best. If so, you

will in earnest fear to lead a life of bodily pleasure, a life of mere ease and indulgence. When GOD sends sickness or want upon you, or upon any of your friends, and so makes a life of mere indulgence impossible, you will reconcile yourself to the severe trial, by looking forward to that world, for which, as we shall one day understand, sickness and want are often the best preparation.

Finally, since "CHRIST is risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept," a Christian heart will feel reconciled, not only to sickness and want, but to death itself, the last enemy. For even the body of a faithful Christian cannot properly be said to die. It is only laid with our LORD in the grave, for a short time, sure soon to awake, and then never more to return to corruption. 'In our flesh we shall see GOD.' What manner of persons then ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! how reverently ought we to preserve our bodies from sin, how scrupulously to respect the bodies of our brethren! since CHRIST will one day call both them and us from the grave, and earnestly desires, if our sins prevent HIM not, to carry us all with HIM into Heaven.

SERMON CCXVIII.

PATIENT WAITING FOR PROMISES.

WHITSUNTIDE.

PSALM *xlvi*. 8.

“ We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O GOD, in the midst of Thy temple.”

THESE words of the Prophet and Psalmist seem to contain a short and plain account of the temper and behaviour of the friends and Apostles of our LORD, during those days of hope and patience, which came to an end on the morning of the first Whitsunday. Our LORD, on departing, told them, that as surely as John had baptized with water, they should be baptized with the HOLY GHOST, not many days from that time. How many HE did not say; but HE distinctly forbade their moving out of Jerusalem, or doing any thing in their great office of witnesses to HIM, until they should be so endued with power from on high. They were to wait for the promise of the FATHER, which they had heard from HIM. Accordingly, having solemnly worshipped HIM on His departure, they returned to Jerusalem with fear and great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Thus exactly did they fulfil the description, which the HOLY SPIRIT by the mouth of David had so long before given in the text, of the temper and behaviour which HE approves of in His Church, and in every member of the same, concerning His great and precious promises. We are to “ wait for His loving-kindness in the midst of His temple.” “ He that believeth shall not make haste.” “ There is need of patience, that after we have done the will of God we may obtain the promise.”

We naturally think the time long, while we are expecting any blessing, more especially when the Word of God is pledged to us for the blessing itself. And the blessing, which the Apostles were now waiting for, was both in itself, and to them, infinitely beyond all others that could be desired. It was the return of HIM who had just departed from them, not leaving them comfortless, but coming to them again by His SPIRIT. But so perfect had their faith now become, that they endured His absence, not only patiently, but with a holy and reverential joy; in this, as in other things, offering an instructive contrast to the behaviour of God's elder Church, the Church of the Israelites in the wilderness, when their Mediator had been out of sight in the mountain for several days. They began to complain,—“As for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him;”—and their complaining ended, as you know, in profane idolatry. But the spiritual Israel, those out of whom God was about to complete the foundation of His Church,—they waited patiently for the LORD. They had taken it on His word, however unaccountable it might sound, that it was expedient for them, His going away; and they were prepared to trust HIM still further, and to abide in faith and quietness any length of time, during which the COMFORTER might delay His coming.

Further; observe the place where they waited. The prophecy had described God's people as waiting in the midst of His temple. Our LORD ordered His Apostles to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, and they were continually in the temple. And as it is said in one of the oldest Prayer-books of the Church, it was “in an upper room of holy and glorious Sion,” where they were assembled with one accord, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the unspeakable Gift poured forth; the same upper room, no doubt, which is mentioned in the first chapter of Acts, to which they had gone from Mount Olivet, immediately after our LORD's ascension, where all the Apostles abode together, “with the women, and Mary the mother of JESUS, and with His brethren.” There they continued, with one mind, in prayer and supplication: they were also continually, that is, at the services, in the temple, praising and blessing God, until the great miracle of miracles happened, and the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers.

Now, does not this teach us something as to the disposition and frame of mind, which GOD approves of and will bless in His Church, and in all to whom His promises are made? Does it not seem to show, first of all, that patient waiting is the strength of GOD's people; that they greatly err if they pretend to fix His times, or to take His matters into their own hands; and, secondly, that they are to take things as they find them, and set out on GOD's work in their social callings from the present moment, and the present state of things, whenever and whatever it be? They are to make the best use they can of it, in doing or suffering their MAKER's will: even as the Apostles did not separate themselves from the temple worship, imperfect as they knew it to be, nor from the communion of the unbelieving Jews, though newly stained with their MASTER's blood; they continued, as we have seen, in the temple; they solemnized the great day of Pentecost, which the Jews kept in remembrance of the giving of the Law, by assembling together with one accord at the third hour; which was one of the Jewish hours of prayer,—an hour nowhere appointed in the Law, but ordained by the voluntary piety of GOD's ancient people, and so far approved by GOD's testimony, as that HE several times answered the devotions of His people at that hour with great and signal blessings from Heaven.

In these and other instances, the holy Apostles showed themselves the true followers of HIM, who came not to destroy the Law but to fulfil; and they seem to set us an example how we too should follow His steps. In other words, we are not to draw back, and let our time pass unimproved, or indulge in any sort of spiritual idleness, on the plea, that “really the state of things is so very bad, we would mend it if we could, but we cannot; and therefore we will just behave ourselves as the world does. If we had lived among the first Christians, or if our own families, or neighbourhood, or acquaintance, were more favourable to such efforts than they are, then the case would be different, we would try and do something; but, as it is, we are sure it would do no good; it is not for us to reform the world; we are not called to it; so we will even stay as we are for the present, and wait until GOD shall send us better opportunities.”

This is no uncommon way of speaking, as might be shown by many familiar instances. Did you never, for example, know a

father or a mother of a family, who delayed to come to the Holy Communion until their children had left off vexing them? or a person who refused to come to Church, because he could not find a sitting exactly to his mind, or because he had something to say against the minister? Did you never know a person in service, or in some other situation in life, who avowedly put off serious thought, and turning to ALMIGHTY GOD, with this sort of speech, "By and by I shall get a quieter place, or more leisure, or a home nearer Church, or companions who will not laugh at me, and then I will be more serious; but, for the present, it is no use to ask me?"

Surely, whenever we hear or see such things, we hear and see what must forfeit the blessing and favour of that God, who rewarded the devotion of His Apostles, while they had only the temple to worship in, and only Jews to worship with, by the gift of the indwelling SPIRIT. It is His will that people should set out from the spot whereon His Providence has placed them, be it favourable or be it unfavourable, and ask the way to heaven with their faces thitherward; sure to find it if they ask with obedient hearts. Let us depend on it, when we have said our worst against the times we live in, the Church or State we belong to, the companions among whom God has cast our lot, still our worst enemy and our most perilous struggle will be found at last within our own hearts. Let us patiently seek God's favour on our diligent use of all the means of grace which HE has put within our reach, abiding in Jerusalem in the temple, and not seeking new ways for ourselves, and see (to use His own words by His Prophet), "if HE will not open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing, that there will not be room enough" in this world "to receive it,"—it will overflow into eternity.

Certainly, there can be no such encouragement besides to earnest repentance, to serious improvement, to patient continuance in well-doing, as the answer which God gave to those prayers, in which our LORD's disciples and His mother continued during the ten days from His ascension to Pentecost. The return of those prayers was, the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven,—JESUS CHRIST coming by His SPIRIT, to save us one by one from the power of sin for the future; as HE had before come in His own Person to offer HIMSELF an all-sufficient sacrifice for us, and so

save us one and all from the punishment of sins past. As St. Paul speaks, in the Epistle to the Romans, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His SON, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life,"—by that heavenly life of His, which HE communicates to us as Christians by His holy indwelling SPIRIT.

This should be very deeply considered, for it brings the mystery of Whitsunday much nearer home to us, than we are perhaps in general used to imagine it. Think of it in this way,—that the most holy and Divine SPIRIT, GOD the HOLY GHOST, is come down, not only to enable the Apostles to preach the Gospel in all nations, whereby, as our Church thankfully confesses in the Communion Service for this day, "we have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of GOD, and of His SON JESUS CHRIST:" not only is the light of CHRIST thus made to shine upon us by the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT, but we are also made, inwardly and spiritually, partakers of the life which is in CHRIST. We now know that the COMFORTER is come to abide in the Church, so as that HE dwells, personally and really, in every one whom HE HIMSELF by baptism shall have first made a member of CHRIST.

This is the constant doctrine taught by the HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF in the writings of the Apostles: "Ye are all the children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST: . . . and because ye are sons, GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of His SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And again, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the SPIRIT, if so be that the SPIRIT of GOD dwell in you. Now if any man have not the SPIRIT of CHRIST, he is none of His." St. Peter describes it as the very condition of Christians, that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of GOD the FATHER, through sanctification of the SPIRIT, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS CHRIST." As much as to say, the SPIRIT was to sanctify them, that is, to renew the image of GOD in them, abiding in them so as to make them partakers of the Divine nature: so might their obedience and good works be a sacrifice well-pleasing to GOD, being sprinkled with the blood of JESUS CHRIST. Thus also St. John makes the presence of the SPIRIT the very token of the abiding of CHRIST

among Christians, according to His own gracious promise when about to depart from among them. "Hereby we know that HE abideth in us, by His SPIRIT which HE hath given us." The visible coming of the HOLY GHOST, on the day of Pentecost, was the outward pledge of His invisible presence, and CHRIST'S invisible Presence by HIM. Christians are thereby assured, to all generations, that their LORD has not left them comfortless, but is perpetually coming unto them; once for all in the Sacrament of Baptism, to make them members of HIMSELF, and from time to time in the other blessed Sacrament, to nourish and perfect in them that sacred Communion.

Such was the loving-kindness with which the LORD of old crowned His people, patiently waiting for it in the midst of His Temple; and though that precious and unspeakable gift be no longer to be waited for,—though it become already, and we dwell in the midst of it,—yet, even in this more perfect Temple, the Church and Household of the living God, we still have to wait for our perfection: we walk by faith, not by sight: we cannot yet be fully like CHRIST, for we do not yet see HIM as HE is, but only through a glass, darkly: this very blessing, for which we are giving thanks, the indwelling of the SPIRIT, is altogether matter of faith; there are no open miracles to assure us of it, no inward feelings on which we can positively rely: the Word of God sealing His Sacraments is our only warrant for quite depending on it.

This being so, the same graces which the disciples of our LORD were called on to exercise between the Ascension-day and Pentecost, must ever be part of our special trial as Christians, a trial of which we shall be more sensible in proportion to our faith and seriousness. God keeps us waiting for His loving-kindness, for the full revelation of His glorious mercies, for the day when we shall know even as also we are known: and this our time of waiting will seem the longer to us, will practise us the more severely in patience and resignation, the more earnestly we are used to think of GOD, and to lay up our treasure in heaven.

Then, again, as to the other caution suggested by the words of the text: if the disciples were to wait for the COMFORTER in Jerusalem, in or near the visible Temple, much more ought we to take care how we wander in any way, even in thought, beyond

the bounds of the spiritual Temple, the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. As Christians, we hope and expect great mercies. God's Holy Scriptures are full of promise and encouragement to us, both as to blessings in store for the whole Church, and as to what we may look for ourselves, as individual souls, redeemed by CHRIST'S Blood, and made members of HIM by His SPIRIT. Let us so long and strive for these mercies, as never to forget the sort of persons to whom they are promised.

For example, with respect to those which concern the whole Church; every year shows more and more how great need there is of patience, since every year we seem to become better acquainted with the disorder and decay which so sadly prevail in CHRIST'S Kingdom; every year we may well fancy the Saints' voices crying out more and more sorrowfully, "How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost THOU not avenge us of them that dwell on the earth?" And there are persons, and as it should seem, sincere ones, who are tempted by these appearances of disorder to take or encourage irregular ways of forwarding the good and holy cause.

Thus, whereas our LORD appointed that His Apostles only should send forth others to minister in His Church in His Name, many persons seem to think it wrong for this to be insisted on, in times and countries where there are many heathenish persons: they say, Why, when the call is so urgent, may not any person, that feels sincere in heart, take on himself the work of the ministry? If they were really as considerate, as I doubt not they are often well-meaning, it ought to be enough to answer them, that such means as they recommend do not answer to the inspired direction; that we must wait patiently for God to send His blessing, not expect to draw it down, like Saul or Balak, or other heathenish characters, by any enchantments or divinations of our own.

Other instances of like disorder might be given; to all which the saying of the father of the faithful may be applied: "My son, GOD will provide HIMSELF a lamb for a burnt-offering." His hand is not waxed short; HE has means enough to accomplish His purposes in His own good time; HE has no need of

the irregular, disobedient, disorderly, any more than of the sinful man.

Pray then, and look, and long, and strive for the promised blessing and triumph of GOD'S Holy Church; pray, and look, and long for the time, when the kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdoms of our LORD and of His CHRIST, and when the earth shall be full of His knowledge as the waters cover the sea; when all the Church's children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of her children: but yet I say, do all that you do in the ways of the Church herself, for surely they are the ways of GOD, and to depart from His ways must be evil; and no appearance, nay, no seeming certainty of profiting ever so many of our brethren, should ever tempt us to break GOD'S commandment, seeing how awful the censure is on those who say, "Let us do evil that good may come."

In conclusion, I may just say, that, as to particular individual blessings, which Christians, however unworthy, may venture to hope for, considering that GOD has made them partakers of this most unspeakable gift, His SPIRIT abiding in them,—first of all, it would be well to consider seriously with ourselves, how little right we can have, knowing all the evil we do against ourselves, to look for any peculiar grace and comfort; next, that GOD'S offers, how large and gracious soever, are all held out to those who shall approach HIM in His ordinances. Persevere in them, not so much caring whether they bring comfort at the time or no, and in time you will find your reward. The seed so thrown into the ground, though that ground might seem unkindly at first, will spring up and bud you know not how, bringing forth first the blade, then the ear, and after that, the full corn in the ear.

Persevere, in private and secret prayer, however little good you seem to yourself to feel by it. Do not leave it off for fear of becoming formal. If it be but accompanied with keeping of the commandments, it will do you good beyond the knowledge of man; just as a river, which seems to part with nothing of its water, and makes no immediate difference in the look of the ground just about it, may yet, in a silent and gradual way, feed and cherish the whole country round.

The same may be said of going to Church, and even of receiving

the Holy Communion. It is not in anywise necessary, that persons should be able distinctly to feel and point out a certain good effect on their minds and feelings, occasioned by such and such a Service or Communion. Only let them attend decently and devoutly, and strive to be exact in all their conduct; and though they "now go on their way weeping," yet "bearing forth such good seed, they will doubtless come again with joy, and bring their sheaves with them," in the last great harvest day.

Only look for one moment to the warnings of past experience. Seek in the Book of the LORD, or in the records of His Church, and see whether any one thing has done so much harm as impatience; in making people heretics, or dissenters, or heathenish churchmen. Has it not been generally so, that they wished to do good, but became impatient of waiting, and of the wholesome restraint of the Temple? While Angels, on the contrary, stooping from heaven, are content to wait God's time; they desire to look into the secrets of our redemption, but they cheerfully put back the desire, and quiet it until it shall please God to fulfil it; and, in the mean time, they at once obey, and that for love's sake, whatever HE would have done. May His will, by the might of His SPIRIT and for the love of His SON, be so done here on earth as it is by them in heaven!

SERMON CCXIX.

CHRIST'S BAPTISM, A TOKEN OF PENTECOST.

WHITSUNTIDE.

ST. LUKE iii. 21, 22.

“JESUS also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the HOLY GHOST descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon HIM.”

WITHOUT all question, there is a deep and mysterious connexion between the Baptism of our SAVIOUR and the coming of the HOLY GHOST upon the Apostles. They are, if we may so speak, parts of the same wonderful work of GOD, the saving Christian people by the Kingdom of Heaven. CHRIST'S Baptism was the beginning, the coming down of the HOLY GHOST on the day of Pentecost was the middle, the Baptism of each Christian is, in a certain sense, part of the end. First, the HOLY SPIRIT came down on JESUS CHRIST, our Head and Surety; then on the whole body or assembly of the Apostles and other Christians at Jerusalem, to make them truly CHRIST'S Body; thirdly, He descends upon each individual person, first in Baptism and afterwards in Confirmation, to make each one individually a member of that Body, a partaker of the blessing.

Accordingly, as the Heaven was opened at the Baptism of our Holy LORD JESUS, and the SPIRIT of GOD was seen descending, in a bodily shape, like a dove, and abiding upon HIM, so was the Heaven silently opened, as on this day, ten days after the Ascension, and the HOLY GHOST was again seen and heard, coming down with a rushing mighty sound, with cloven tongues, like as of fire, which settled on each of the Apostles, and they began to

speak with other tongues, as the SPIRIT gave each one power to do. That is, being filled with the HOLY GHOST, they presently set about the great work to which they were called, of preaching to all nations in their several languages; as our LORD, for His part, being filled with the same SPIRIT, went out straightway into the wilderness, to accomplish that great combat with the Devil, wherewith His ministry was to begin.

Our SAVIOUR was praying, after His Baptism, when the HOLY GHOST came upon HIM; so the Apostles, when they returned from witnessing His Ascension, continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, until HE sent the COMFORTER according to His promise. As it was the same heavenly PERSON who came down first upon the HEAD and afterwards upon the Members, so there was, by GOD'S Providence, a great resemblance between the outward tokens given in the one case and in the other.

And one thing we shall do well to observe, for the better understanding of the great things which GOD has done for us; that it was not one or more special gifts of the HOLY GHOST, but the HOLY GHOST, the third Divine Person HIMSELF, Who came down first on our LORD and afterwards on His Church. That Holy and Blessed SPIRIT has innumerable gifts and graces, which, both before and after the day of Pentecost, HE divideth to every man severally as HE will; but the greatest Gift of all, the Infinite, Unspeakable Gift, is His coming down in His own Person to dwell in the souls and bodies of men, join them as true members to JESUS CHRIST, and cause them to have from CHRIST a new and heavenly life.

It is the HOLY GHOST HIMSELF, not the gifts of the HOLY GHOST only, for which to-day we give GOD thanks; and although many gifts and graces had been vouchsafed to favoured persons in all times before, the HOLY GHOST HIMSELF had not been given. St. John informs us, that HE could not yet be given, because JESUS was not yet glorified.

Abraham, therefore, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph and Samuel, Moses and Joshua, Job and David, Elijah, Daniel, and the Prophets, great and holy and good as they were, and mightily blessed with the gifts of GOD'S SPIRIT, yet that very SPIRIT Itself they had not yet, in the same sense as Christians have It after their Baptism: they were not yet regenerate, they were not yet

members of CHRIST, they were not yet in the kingdom of Heaven. This greatest blessing they have obtained or shall obtain, in some way unknown to us, after their departure out of this world; as St. Paul teaches in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: GOD having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." But to the Church this astonishing change was wrought openly as on this day; and ever since then, every little child who is made a member of CHRIST by Baptism, had thereupon the HOLY GHOST dwelling in him, in a nearer and more heavenly way than HE dwelt in St. John the Baptist, who was the greatest Saint before CHRIST came.

We have our LORD's own word for this: "Verily I say unto you, Among them who are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

So great and precious is the heavenly gift, the HOLY COMFORTER entering into men's hearts; and it could not be before this time, because that until now "JESUS was not yet glorified." And of this,—the promise of the FATHER to CHRIST's members,—the SPIRIT descending on CHRIST HIMSELF was a Type, a First-fruit, and a Beginning.

Now although the gifts of the HOLY GHOST were not always accompanied with outward and sensible signs, yet the HOLY GHOST HIMSELF, descending as HE did on our LORD and on the Church, has always, so far as appears from Scripture, seen fit to manifest HIMSELF thus outwardly. When HE came down on JESUS HIMSELF, it was "in a bodily shape like a Dove," and with the voice of the ALMIGHTY FATHER, "This is My beloved SON, in Whom I am well pleased." When HE came down on the Church, there was an appearance of fiery tongues, cloven tongues of fire, that sat upon each of the Apostles. When HE comes to each one of us in Baptism, then also there is both a sight and a voice; the sight of the water wherein the person is baptized, the sound of the priest's voice saying the holy words, "I baptize thee in the Name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST."

So that we are no more to doubt whether an infant, rightly baptized, has received the HOLY SPIRIT, than St. John the

Baptist doubted of the SPIRIT'S descending and remaining on our LORD, when he had seen the Dove and heard the voice; no more than we should have doubted, had we stood by on the day of Pentecost, and heard the rushing mighty wind, and seen the cloven tongues like as of fire. Our own Church's direction to us is, "Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe" these things.

But further, we may plainly see that those outward tokens of the HOLY COMFORTER'S Presence do not only make us sure of that Presence, but also instruct us not a little in the manner and in the greatness of the change HE works in us. Water for example,—pure water, springing out of the earth, or dropping from Heaven by the immediate gift of GOD;—who sees not at once that it represents the refreshing and cleansing power of that Divine Grace, which, coming direct from GOD, purifies the stain of our hearts, and makes us strong and active to keep the commandments? Who is not reminded by it of the living water which the LORD hath promised to give us, not only to quench our thirst for the time, but to be in us "a well of water springing up to everlasting life?"

Again, what signified the fiery tongues which settled upon each of the Saints on this great day of Pentecost? We perceive in a moment that the shape of tongues was intended to point out the gift of Divine languages, which was suddenly communicated to all of them. But why was it in the substance of fire? Surely, because of the searching power of CHRIST'S SPIRIT, which in a wonderful manner tries every man's heart of what sort it is, penetrating into all the dark corners of our souls, and where it is not resisted, enlightening, warming, melting all; spreading all ways, and transforming all into its own nature, sometimes not without grievous pain and suffering. Think of grace working in this manner, and you will presently see that it is like a refiner's fire, purifying the elect of GOD, and purging them as gold and silver, that they may stand the terrible trial of the last day.

Lastly and chiefly, consider well the wonderful appearance in the text. When the LORD of all had been baptized, and was praying, HE went up straightway out of the water, "and the HOLY GHOST descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon HIM." It is probable that the appearance of fire, or of a bright cloud, which

had taken in former times the shape of a pillar guiding the Israelites, and which afterwards took that of fiery tongues lighting on the Apostles, now hovered over the Blessed JESUS in somewhat of the form of a dove, with wings spreading over HIM; and we may be certain that it came down with the gentle steady motion of a dove.

What are we to learn from this? for we may be sure it is not told us in vain. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, partly because of His unspeakable patience, and lowliness, and innocency, is often we know called a Lamb; and doubtless we may discern the same kind of reason why the Third Person vouchsafes to represent HIMSELF as a Dove.

We may think, for instance, of the prayers, the "dovelike moanings," which this Blessed COMFORTER puts into the hearts of GOD'S people. "The SPIRIT," says St. Paul, "helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the SPIRIT Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." That is a true Saint's description of the sacred SPIRIT of GOD and of CHRIST, earnestly praying in the hearts of CHRIST'S people, filling them with longing desires and earnest breathings after heavenly things, causing them to cry mightily unto GOD, to thirst and long after heavenly delights, as the hart after the rivers of waters. Herein the HOLY GHOST is like a dove, because the dove goes on in such wistful, plaintive, longing tones, sometimes far into the night, very often in the early morning. They who lie awake, or who are about betimes, know the sound very well; and one can hardly listen to it without feeling as if it told us what a restless thing this world is, and how we have need to set our hearts on an infinitely better treasure, which as yet is far away from us. And it goes on like a person earnest in prayer, still repeating the same note, as if it could never be tired, nor stop, until it had found the rest which its soul loveth. Such is the voice of the HOLY GHOST in prayer, inwardly uttered in a Christian's heart; and because it is like the unwearied melancholy tones of the dove, that may be one reason why the Blessed COMFORTER came down on our LORD in a bodily shape like a dove.

This reason is given us by a great and holy bishop, St. Augustin; and he adds another, the simple harmless innocence of the

dove; and yet another, its gentle, peaceful, loving nature: whereby it becomes the token both of truth and charity. And whereas it is said, that the dove never forsakes its mate, this may serve to remind us of the infinite unchangeable love of the Most High God, enduring for ever and ever upon them that fear HIM. His promise is, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

In these and other ways the Holy Dove is God's token to us of the Almighty and Blessed COMFORTER; and it is also His token of the grace which HE bestows upon His Church. For such as HE is, such HE would have us to be. The very purpose and glory of our Christian calling is to bring us back to God's Image, from which we are so sadly fallen.

"We know not yet what we shall be, but we know that, when HE shall appear, we shall be like HIM, for we shall see HIM as HE is." The Church, therefore, the Sanctified, is called in Scripture a Dove, as well as the HOLY SPIRIT who comes to sanctify. The Church is called a Dove, as when it is said, "My Dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her:" because there is but one Church, to which all the promises are made. Again, each obedient Christian soul too, in which CHRIST delights to dwell by His SPIRIT, is compared to this sacred bird, the Dove: because it is changed by the indwelling SPIRIT into His own likeness, to be gentle and loving, simple and peaceful like HIM. Thus David wishes that he had wings like a dove,—grace and help such as is given to the Saints,—to flee away from the troubles of the world, and be at rest in holy meditation. Thus our LORD HIMSELF is introduced, mercifully encouraging the devout soul to present herself before HIM in prayer, and tell HIM all her wants. "O my Dove that art in the clefts of the rock, (that is, whose thoughts are in the wounds of the HOLY JESUS, as the wild pigeon makes her nest in the cliffs by the sea,) let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice." Thus that ancient dove, which Noah sent out of the Ark, was a type of the true spiritual mind, abiding with our LORD in His Church, and finding no rest any where else; and wherever her thoughts wander, even in this lower

world, still finding tokens of peace and hope, and humbly acknowledging God's mercy in them, as Noah's dove returned to him and to the Ark, with an olive leaf plucked off in her mouth.

We see, then, our calling, Christian brethren; we see what our LORD would have us be; we see what especial graces and virtues HE sets before us, to be thought on, and prayed for, this high and holy day. We are to be simple and harmless as doves. It is His own Word; we are to be simple and harmless. We are to put far away from us the unchristian fancy, that it is good to be knowing about wickedness. Never again, as long as we live, are we to be ashamed of that happy ignorance, whereby God's fatherly care would keep us out of mischief. Never again are we to imagine, with Eve, that it becomes us to know something of evil as well as of good.

Remember this in particular, you that are preparing to be confirmed. The consecrated hands of the Bishop are, we hope, soon to be spread over you, in token of the presence and outstretched wings of that Dove which descended on our SAVIOUR. See, HE warns you how you are to get yourselves ready for that awful yet blessed moment. "Be harmless as doves." "Be simple concerning evil." Make up your minds to that saying of a wise man of old: "The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom, neither at any time the counsel of sinners prudence." Care not to seem clever and knowing among foolish men; care not for their ridicule, when you know you are trying to please God.

Then, remember that CHRIST'S Dove is undefiled; and think what a miserable thing it will be, should you come to kneel before GOD with any wilful impurity of heart and life, and bring a curse on you instead of a blessing. Remember that CHRIST'S Dove is without gall, without bitterness, or malice, or spite, or envy. She is very gentle, and has good words, aye, and kind thoughts too, and prayers, for them "that despitefully use her and persecute her."

Remember, lastly, that CHRIST'S Dove is full of lowly and earnest moanings to HIM; she prays and mourns continually, because, though contented with her condition in this world, she is ever longing to be in a better world. She thirsts for God, yea, even for the living GOD: her thought by day and by night is, "When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"

My brethren, if we know in our secret hearts that these marks of the saintly character, these tokens of CHRIST'S love, find as yet little in us to answer to them, let us not rest, let us be afraid; for it is probable that we are far worse than we know; let us be afraid, but never let us despair. We cannot indeed enter into Heaven, until we are greatly changed. But this SPIRIT is Almighty to change us, as well as all Holy to hate our sins. HE can do great things in a short time, in making the proud lowly, the unkind gentle, the worldly full of penitential love; HE came to us in Holy Baptism, and pledged HIMSELF to do so, if we sincerely and with all our hearts call upon HIM in good time. Call upon HIM, and seek HIM early, and you will find HIM waiting at your doors. HE will prepare you to meet your SAVIOUR, and your SAVIOUR will carry you into Heaven.

SERMON CCXX.

THE BREATH OF THE MOST HIGH GOD.

WHITSUNTIDE.

PSALM civ. 30.

“Thou sendest forth Thy SPIRIT, they are created: and THOU renewest the face of the earth.”

THESE words were apparently intended to put thoughtful readers in mind of the history of the creation of the world, as we find it in the Book of Genesis. “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the SPIRIT of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” The work of creation did not begin, things did not receive any order, nor had come into that condition which caused the ALMIGHTY, seeing them all, to pronounce them “very good,” until the HOLY SPIRIT of God had “brooded upon the face of the dark void deep,” as one may imagine a bird brooding with outspread wings, according to the force of the original word. HE brooded over it, and in some mysterious way made it apt to obey God’s commands, and to bring forth out of its own bosom those marvellous works, which, one after another, GOD called into being out of the great deep, during those six days of creation.

In like manner, when all things were again become in a manner empty, and void, and waste, by reason of the mischief which the wilful sin of Adam had caused; when it had become quite manifest, that men left to themselves must perish in their misery,

(they can but “ die, and turn again to their dust”); then did God send forth His HOLY SPIRIT, the COMFORTER promised by our SAVIOUR, to unite them as true members to JESUS CHRIST, so to new create them, and “ renew the face of the earth.” Since He came down on the day of Pentecost, a new Heaven and a new earth has begun here among men ; all things are changed, all put in a new light, all clothed with a kind of glory from above. So great is this change, that the New Testament mentions it repeatedly under the title of a “ new creation,” a “ new birth,” a “ kingdom which cannot be moved,” and the like: and the Church has always considered such Psalms as this 104th, which celebrates God’s glory in the words of the first creation, to be in meaning, in their Christian meaning, hymns of praise for the second creation also; for the regeneration of the world out of wickedness and confusion, as well as for its first birth out of disorder, and emptiness, and darkness.

The breath of the MOST HIGH, then, mentioned in the text, is the HOLY SPIRIT of the FATHER and the SON, the Third Person in the Blessed Inseparable TRINITY, proceeding from the FATHER and the SON to give life, and order, and harmony, to His creatures; especially to make His reasonable creatures, Angels and men, partakers of His unspeakable holiness. Therefore, the Psalm which so teaches concerning the Breath of the LORD, is appointed to be one of the proper Psalms for this great day; ALMIGHTY GOD having so ordered this world which we see, in reference to that better one which we do not see, that the one is throughout a kind of pattern or shadow of the other; and the hymns of praise for the first creation, which the Book of Psalms has in many places, are suitable to be used when we are glorifying God for this His second and far more perfect creation, His spiritual and eternal world.

And as the Church on Christmas-day taught us to regard the light of the sun as a visible token of our SAVIOUR, according to St. John’s expression, “ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;” so at this season she teaches us to regard the HOLY SPIRIT as being, in some wonderful sense, the Breath of God; as indeed the word “ SPIRIT” would of itself imply, for in the first place it means “ Breath.”

The HOLY SPIRIT is called the Breath of God, as being

breathed out in a mysterious and marvellous way over His whole creation, but especially into the souls of reasonable beings, to make all in their several measure partakers of God and of happiness. The HOLY SPIRIT is God secretly present, encompassing us about, entering into us, piercing even to the very depths of our being, like the air we breathe, unseen, but known by its effects.

If this parable of Breath be well considered, it may seem to account for other like parables, so to call them, by which Holy Scripture teaches us how to think of This our most HOLY COMFORTER. For instance, the HOLY SPIRIT is sometimes compared to the wind, as in the discourse of our SAVIOUR to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the SPIRIT." The wind, blowing so far and wide over the world, invisible, but possessed often of immense power, unknown as to where it begins and ends, and as to the rules by which it rises or falls, is set forth as an emblem of that SPIRIT, whose coming was to-day made known to His chosen Messengers by "a sudden great sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting." So the HOLY SPIRIT came suddenly, not according to any rules which we could calculate upon, but according to God's good pleasure, when HE saw the time was arrived for the Kingdom of Heaven to be set up. It was "a rushing mighty wind;" the whole world might perceive that there was a heavenly power in It, which had never yet made Itself known. "It filled all the house where they were sitting:" the SPIRIT of GOD showed HIMSELF alike in all places of the Church at once—north, south, east, and west; it is the same Divine Presence and Power, accompanying the Sacraments of JESUS CHRIST, and answering the prayers of His people.

Thus the wind, when we hear or feel it, may remind us of the Breath of ALMIGHTY GOD; and the effects of the wind, the clouds which it brings over the earth, the moisture which the air takes up, the dews which descend, the rains which pour down, the springs which gush out, the waters which flow over the earth; all these are in Scripture tokens of the same SPIRIT, showing HIMSELF in gifts and sanctifying graces, and communicating spiritual life to His people.

Thus the Cloud of Glory, in which, as well as in the Red Sea, the children of Israel were baptized, was the figure, as we learn from St. Paul, of the HOLY SPIRIT by whom Christians are regenerated in the Waters of Baptism.

The dew which came down at the prayer of Gideon, first on the fleece alone, then on all the ground besides, leaving the fleece alone dry, betokened the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT in several degrees, for a long time given to the Jews only, then at the setting up of CHRIST'S Kingdom made common to all nations, and that in an infinitely higher and more blessed way. The manna which came down all night, silently on every side of the camp, that too was a kind of dew from Heaven, "a gracious rain upon God's Inheritance, refreshing it when it was weary," as another of the Psalms appointed for this season teaches, adding, that "God's congregation was to dwell therein,"—the whole Church is to dwell in the SPIRIT of GOD, as in the air it breathes, as in the comfortable and refreshing dewy vapour, which makes this earth tolerable for her to abide in.

The water gushing from the smitten rock was the token and sign of the HOLY SPIRIT, flowing forth from JESUS CHRIST crucified to every one of His members, even as HE HIMSELF declared: "If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink: he that believeth on ME, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "This (St. John adds) spake HE of the SPIRIT, which they that believe on HIM should receive." It is also compared to water generally, as in the Sacrament of Baptism, and in the vision wherein St. John saw living waters proceed from the Throne of GOD and the LAMB, and go out through the whole sacred city, "a pure river of the water of life."

Nay, and that well-known token also of a dove, by which the HOLY SPIRIT manifested HIMSELF to the Baptist, is not altogether of a different sort from these. For the hovering of the HOLY DOVE we may suppose, was like a soft cloud, gently wafted from Heaven to settle on the SON of GOD; and this may have been one reason why that figure in particular was fixed on.

You see, then, what a number of common things, the most common things in our sight, ALMIGHTY GOD has set down in His Word as emblems of His Holy and Blessed SPIRIT, the TEACHER

and COMFORTER of all faithful souls. If you do but see a cloud in the sky, you see what may remind you of HIM, overshadowing the Church with blessed consolations and promises, coming to be the Tabernacle and Refuge, the Home and Shelter of all who are weary and heavy laden. The morning and evening dews are like His refreshing graces, ever new, never failing, given impartially to all, coming silently, but known by their purity and brightness, and by the holy hope and joy and strength, which they spread over the whole heart and life of man; not unlike the cheerful green which follows on a timely shower in spring or summer.

Nay, even such an ordinary sight as a shower of rain is a sign of the same high Presence, if Christians will but have the heart to believe it. It tells us of HIM who is always ready, in answer to our true and faithful prayers, to "send a gracious rain on His inheritance, and refresh it in its weariness."

And so, too, if we will follow the example of those who came nearest our LORD's own time, we shall not be ashamed to see continually, even in the wells by our doors, or in the brooks or watercourses that we meet with, something to remember HIM by, who has vouchsafed, once for all, to "sanctify the element of water to the mystical washing away of sin."

So many, and so common and cheap, are the lessons which the works of GOD all around will read to us, if we have ears to hear, concerning the ever-blessed SPIRIT; and how unspeakably deep and high, how infinitely important, is the truth which they join to teach! That HE who is the Finger, the Power of GOD, the HOLY GHOST, one with the FATHER and the SON, as HE is present in all His works, so is HE ever in a peculiar manner abiding in those whom HE has regenerated and made members of JESUS CHRIST,—out of sight, out of hearing, beyond all feeling or any outward sense, yet infinitely nearer and closer to every one of us than any of the things we do see, hear, or feel, or can make out by reasoning; ready at hand to all His faithful ones, at every moment of their dangerous and trying pilgrimage, to guide and comfort, to purify and refresh them; so that whatever difficulties arise, we may still say, 'We are, by baptism, partakers of GOD and of CHRIST; we have once renounced and overcome the Evil One, and by the same Power we may do so

again, because greater is HE that is in us than he that is in the world.'

More especially we are hereby taught to think of our own spiritual and hidden life, the life which we have concealed and laid up for us with CHRIST in GOD, the life which is altogether of faith, not at all of sight. I say, whatever puts us in mind of the HOLY SPIRIT, puts us in mind of that life; for HE, as the Belief truly tells us, is "the LORD and Giver of life." CHRIST, we know, is our only life, as many as truly belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. Now the HOLY SPIRIT joins us to CHRIST, makes us members of HIM in Holy Baptism; keeps us so in the other Blessed Sacrament; and, therefore, especially is HE called "the LORD and Giver of Life" in the Creed. "By HIM we live, and move, and have our being," as people of GOD.

Observe now, how well this agrees with the teaching both of the Old and New Testament, concerning the heavenly operation and providence of GOD'S SPIRIT. First, the SPIRIT of GOD, moving on the face of the waters, prepared them mysteriously for the wonderful births, which GOD kept bringing out of them, till the six days' work was over. The waters cherished the still and dead elements, to bring forth life when ALMIGHTY GOD should command. By and by, when mention is made of creating man, we read, "The LORD GOD formed man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the Breath of life, and man became a living soul." What was it, then, my brethren, that gave our first father life? It was the Breath of Life, the SPIRIT of GOD, breathed from above into his nostrils. The natural life, then, of the first Adam was a gift of the SPIRIT, a token of His Divine Presence; but much more so the spiritual life, which Christians have by union with the second ADAM. To bring us,—us I say, who are here present, unworthy sinners (for every one of us was then in His mind)—to bring us to ALMIGHTY GOD, the HOLY GHOST first performed this great wonder: HE afterwards came down from Heaven in the fulness of time, descended upon the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, and caused our LORD to be conceived in her womb, and to take our human nature upon HIM of her substance, she still continuing a most pure and holy virgin. Thus, that CHRIST'S life might be communicated to us, did GOD'S watchful love provide for HIM to be first

partaker of our life; and as our regeneration was to be the work of the HOLY GHOST, so was CHRIST's nativity ordered in like manner.

Again, at the baptism of our LORD, when that water, and in it all water, was sanctified to be the outward means of that blessed union and communion with CHRIST, here also again the HOLY SPIRIT came down from Heaven to bless the water for the purpose. At Pentecost HE came down as in cloven tongues of fire, to quicken the dead world and make it a living Church; in Baptism it is His gracious doing, that we put on CHRIST, who is our Life; in the holy Eucharist, HE it is, HE the most HOLY SPIRIT, who comes down in answer to the prayers of His Church, and works that unseen wonder, that the Bread and Wine become, to those who worthily receive them, the Body and Blood of CHRIST, verily taken and received. That is, in the Eucharist the HOLY SPIRIT comes down, to strengthen and refresh in us CHRIST, who is our Life.

Lastly, the HOLY SPIRIT is to us a Giver of life, because HE plants even in our bodies a life-giving seed, CHRIST's Body received by faith; and it is a pledge that we never really die, but sleep; it is a token, in our very outward members, that we may look in hope for a glorious resurrection; as St. Paul reasons in the Epistle to the Romans, "If the SPIRIT of HIM which raised up JESUS from the dead dwell in you, HE that raised up CHRIST from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His SPIRIT which dwelleth in you."

Thus is CHRIST's SPIRIT to each one of us the LORD and Giver of Life from the beginning; thus is HE near at hand, keeping us continually joined to JESUS CHRIST, our Head, if we have not thrown His grace quite away.

Surely, if we believe these things indeed, they will not pass away out of our minds; they must seem to us so great and wonderful, so near to our ourselves, as to swallow up all other thoughts and cares in this one, how we may show ourselves not unworthy of the miracles of God's mercy towards us, how we may avoid grieving that good SPIRIT, and forcing the ALMIGHTY FATHER to take HIM from us. If we believe, that, as baptized and justified Christians, we are really temples of the HOLY GHOST, members of the SON, partakers of the Divine Nature,

even as St. Paul and St. Peter plainly teach ; which of us can say, that he has been or is behaving himself with that awfulness and fear, which becomes those to whom GOD is so very nigh ? Which of us is thankful, as he ought, to that gracious and merciful GOD, who has given us not this or that blessing, but the Gift, the gracious, the unspeakable Gift, even His OWNSELF, to dwell in our hearts and bodies, to cure us of all evil, and perfect us in every good ? Surely our condition is now, since our baptism, like that of GOD's angels before any of them fell ; we are brought very near to HIM, nearer than any of us can imagine or express : our blessings are heavenly blessings and privileges, our communion is with the Inhabitants of Heaven, we see " the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST," in His Church, and in His Scriptures ; and we know and feel all the while that we have as yet all our blessings, and the hope of infinitely greater ones, on trial ; we have them to make sure of, or to lose, for ever, according as we try to keep GOD's commandments or no. This is, so far, like the condition of the high Angels in Heaven before they fell ; or like that of our first parents in Paradise.

Let us not, I beseech you, be so childish, as to put off serious thoughts of this our state, with the ordinary saying, " GOD is merciful ; and I hope I shall find pardon, though I have sinned, as many more have done." Was not HE the same merciful GOD,—was not His mercy over all His works, when the Angels sinned and when Adam fell, as truly as it is now ? and yet His sentence came to pass in both cases ; the one lost Heaven, and the other Paradise. Whatever else we do, then, or refrain from doing, let us at least endeavour to open our eyes, and contemplate our real condition. The outward world indeed is to us the same as if we were no Christians ; the breath of Heaven is around us, the dew falls, the winds blow, the rain descends, the waters gush out, and all the other works of Nature go on, as if we had never been taken out of this wicked world, and placed in the Kingdom of GOD ; but in reality, we know that there is a meaning and power in all these common things, which they can have to none but Christians. They are so many tokens of the HOLY GHOST, the COMFORTER, the Breath of GOD, which proceeded and yet proceeds from the FATHER and the SON, to new-create a ruined world, to

renew each one of us in particular to a new life, the life of JESUS CHRIST. That good SPIRIT is around us on every side; HE is within us; we are His temples; we do not leave HIM behind us when we go out of Church; only let us so live, that we force HIM not to depart from us at last.

SERMON CCXXI.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

PART I.

EZEKIEL xviii. 4.

“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

THE mysterious truth which these most solemn words declare to us is so terrible, and the thought which they cannot but awaken in any serious mind is so overwhelming, that it may well make one tremble to utter or to hear them. It is as if all the souls from Adam to the very end of time were summoned up, and were passing before us at one glance. It is as if all who have been so wonderfully mingled together here on earth, so dependent on one another, and so bound up together by all sorts of ties, that we can scarcely separate them even in idea—kings and people, parents and children, masters and servants—were all gathered, as they shall one day be, before the Throne of ALMIGHTY GOD, and told by His own word, that after all, notwithstanding all these ties, each is in GOD’S sight a single independent being; an immortal soul dwelling in a mortal body, answerable for every thought, and word, and deed done in that body, to an All-seeing, Eternal JUDGE.

The hardened Jews, His chosen people, as they had been of old, when all was going wrong, and they were getting worse and worse from age to age;—every generation worse than that before it, and every son worse than his father,—began to blaspheme God. He had threatened of old, in the second command-

ment, that "HE would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children." HE threatened; and what HE threatened, HE of course performed. The fathers sinned, and the children in this world suffered, as we often see is the case now: one generation did wrong, the next was judged. The Jewish Church of old in one age departed from GOD; in the next went into captivity, or the people endured plague, famine, and the sword, for their sins; and if they continued impenitent, the curse went on, as it were, collecting age after age. Forefathers did wrong, and their children followed them; kings and princes did wrong, and the people were involved in their sin, till they gradually, as it was said, filled up the measure of their fathers; and when the judgment came, some great calamity upon the Church and people, it might be truly said, that thus the sins of the fathers were visited on the children.

Now, when all this was before their eyes, what was their duty? Surely to do what GOD's prophets and ministers so earnestly warned them to do,—to turn, every one in his place, from their evil ways. These judgments themselves were so many warnings to them, one and all, to do so; to confess their sins and the sins of their forefathers, and at once, each in his own place and measure, to repent and forsake them.

Instead of all this, what did they do? They railed and blasphemed, and became reckless: they carried on the sin, and so increased the curse. In the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel particularly, instead of looking to themselves and their own sins, they flew in the face of ALMIGHTY GOD, and complained, with sullen unbelief, of His ways as "unequal." They could not help themselves, they said; they were delivered to do all these abominations, and so they would do as they chose, and did not care what might become of them; and they made a taunting proverb about His visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." These words they seem to have used in mockery, partly to reply against GOD for judging them and for sending them into captivity, and partly to excuse themselves for going on as they did; thus almost glorying in their shame.

It was in answer to this sullen, infidel way of talking, that HE speaks to them by the mouth of Ezekiel:—"What mean ye, that

ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the LORD GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.—Behold, all souls are MINE; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is MINE: the soul that sinneth, *it* shall die.” Surely here are words which appeal to our hearts and consciences. It is true fathers do what is wrong, and their children in this world often, by the laws of His mysterious yet righteous providence, suffer for it: one parent squanders away his money, and his child is left in poverty and want; another is a drunkard, and his child may inherit, as we say, from his father a bad constitution, weakness, and ill health; a whole generation are involved in some great sin, and the next or some after generation suffer for it; the righteous sometimes are mingled amongst the wicked, and perish in famines and pestilences; to human eyes there is the same end to them both. Yet, however men are thus mingled together, however dependent they are one upon another, yet, after all, all are GOD's, and each is, in GOD's sight, a single being on his trial for eternity. “Behold, all souls are MINE;” all,—from the very moment when the LORD GOD took of the dust of the ground, and made man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul, and placed that living soul on his trial,—from that moment all souls are His, as if each were this moment created. All,—from the moment when the first man died, and his soul departed; and those who in all ages and countries have departed, and whose trial is over, and who are now awaiting in the world of spirits His final judgment;—and again, all those immortal souls who are at this moment on trial in this world,—*all* are His!

Yes, and *each* is as truly an immortal soul, answerable for itself to GOD, as Adam was when he came fresh from the Hands of his CREATOR, and there was no one in the world besides: each is an immortal soul for whom CHRIST died, as if he alone had needed a SAVIOUR:—each soul is as well-known to HIM, as narrowly watched, and as truly cared for, as if there were no other soul in the world besides. Truly, then, all souls are His,—all in His keeping; and “must all appear before the Judgment-seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things

done in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Here, then, is the great point of practice which we are much concerned to lay to heart; that, notwithstanding an evil nature, derived from our first father Adam, and the force of early evil influence and bad example, whether from his own parents or from bad companions, each has that within him which tells him he has a soul; the voice of what we call "conscience," i. e. the voice of God within us, which warns us, and tells each of us, that if he sins, he sins by his own fault, and leaves him without excuse if he does not listen to it. His evil nature from Adam is no excuse; God, in Holy Baptism, gives him grace to counteract and withstand it. His example from evil parents and bad companions is no real excuse, so long as he has a spirit within him which bids him leave what he knows to be bad examples, and follow what he knows to be good and holy ones; preventing grace to warn him lest he fall, and converting grace to follow and bring him back when he falls. He is an immortal soul in the Hands and under the Eye of the living God.

This, I say, is the great truth which all should lay to heart and carefully examine, that notwithstanding this evil nature, which remains even in the regenerate; notwithstanding the influence of evil training, and force of bad example, and a corrupt age, still each has "a conscience;" a knowledge of what is right and wrong: each is thus dealt with as on his trial, with life and death set before him, and power of choice; and each baptized Christian, as sanctified with God's HOLY SPIRIT and in covenant with God, is bound, and if he be not wanting to himself, has the power to choose life, to live as God would have him live, to choose the good part; and if he has fallen from it, to turn from his wickedness and live. Each has that within him which tells him plainly enough, that if he dies, if he should be lost at last, it will not be merely because Adam fell, or because his father was wicked, or because the age or place in which he lived was bad, but because he has himself sinned "against Heaven and before God:" our conscience answers, when God, by His Holy Prophet, tells us that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Now, to bring this home to ourselves—we are living in days in which the Church has left her first love, and lost her first holi-

ness; as citizens of a country which has in many respects departed from GOD: many have parents who have been brought up ill, and are living, from day to day, in families which have cast off all love and fear of HIM, and are without GOD in the world. All these things, ALMIGHTY GOD knows, are indeed against us: yet, after all, let each one ask himself, as in the presence of the All-seeing God, is he not conscious that he has "a soul?" and that, whatever his circumstances may have been in life, whatever disadvantages he may have had, he *ought* to have served, and he *might* have served, his GOD and SAVIOUR better than he *has* served HIM; and might have been far fitter for death and eternity than he is. In fact, he has been, in some wonderful and mysterious way, left in the hands of his own counsel, and has fallen more or less by his own conscious wickedness.

In short, then, this is the course of ALMIGHTY GOD's mysterious Providence: the sins of the fathers are in this world visited upon the children; we see it every where; and no less is it true and certain, that each in his generation, each in his station, father and child, is a single independent being, an immortal soul, on his great trial before GOD for eternity. In this world a family may be poor, because a father or grandfather was a spendthrift; or they may be unhealthy, because a father may have been profligate; but in matters of the soul, whatever merciful allowances HE who knows *all* will make for each, one need not necessarily be wicked because a father was wicked; drunken, because a father was a drunkard; or profligate, because a father was profligate.

It is, indeed, an ordinance of GOD that parents should have the charge of their children; and it is so natural, that we must even call it providential that children are like their parents, and almost by a sort of instinct catch their ways and manners, and imitate their example. Yet is there, we may not doubt, some secret undercurrent of the Providence of ALMIGHTY GOD which counteracts in a measure such evil influence, and takes care of children, notwithstanding, and, indeed, in spite of it all. We often say, indeed, with an eye to what we must ordinarily expect when we see a bad son of a bad parent, "Yes, it is a shocking thought, but who can wonder at it?—he is a drunkard, or a blasphemer, but so, I remember well, was his father before him. It is sad to see him, and hear him speak, but what better could be

expected? It would be next to a miracle if it were not so." Such is our remark about the ordinary aspect of things. But, then on the other hand, we see what seem extraordinary things, we *do* see many such miracles of mercy; we see exceptions to this rule every day and hour; we see good men's children going wrong in spite of good and holy training; and wicked men's children going right, notwithstanding evil example and evil influence; though, when we see it, we call it a miracle of mercy; we see in the same house, under the same roof, gathered round the same table, souls, immortal souls, training up, side by side, for heaven and for hell. And so it will go on, doubtless, to the last, when "two shall be in one bed, the one taken and the other left; two women grinding at the same mill, the one shall be taken and the other left." Surely we cannot think of this subject without much awe and sorrow, and yet not without some comfort, on the whole. For what do we see around us at this moment? doubtless, a great judgment upon God's Church, which may yet be greater. Generations are swept off in a way fearful to think of;—gone, we know not where:—Another generation is come. We see grown up people inheriting the miserable state of their fathers before them, and following their evil examples, and laying up curses for those that come after them; casting stumbling-blocks in the way of the little ones committed to their charge, swearing and blaspheming before them, or teaching them to thieve, and drink, and game, and making them tenfold more the children of hell than themselves. Perhaps they would say they know no better, for their own parents did just the same; and *their* parents, again, before them.

However, souls seem perishing on every side in a way which makes many quite awe-struck, and ready to cry out almost in dismay, "Who will show us any good?"—and when *great* schemes seem powerless, much more may an individual ask half in despair, What can I do? But now it is, when great schemes are failing, and men are so perplexed and divided that they are thrown upon themselves and upon individual exertions, that it may seem as if ALMIGHTY GOD would lift up His countenance upon us, and show us what is good. Let us look at what one soul did in evil days amidst failing hearts:—a great, indeed, and good and loving and holy soul; but still all alone. Let us reflect what the devout and

penitent Daniel did. He, during the most evil days of the captivity, confessed his own sin and the sins of his people alone in secret before God. Whilst some, when God's judgments were upon them, were looking with the spirit of sullen discontent and recklessness on that awful dispensation by which the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children, and using the taunting infidel proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge:" others, perhaps, dismayed and disheartened altogether because iniquity abounded,—Daniel was secretly chastening himself before ALMIGHTY GOD, and confessing his own sin and the sins of his people, living a life of deep penitence and prayer, and seeing not only how God in His all-righteous judgment visited the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate HIM, but how HE kept mercy unto thousands of generations of them that loved and obeyed HIM: that so the consideration of God's judgments and mercies, His wrath and goodness, might bring one or other to Himself.—"I set my face unto the LORD GOD, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the LORD my GOD, and made my confession, and said, O LORD, the great and dreadful GOD, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love HIM, and to them that keep His commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments. O LORD, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against THEE. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our GOD, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth." This is the way, and these are some of the earnest words by which the holy Daniel sought in very evil days to do good,—by cleansing his own heart; by burning confession of sins, and deep penitence and earnest prayer. This is the way in which he hoped in his measure to arrest the curse which lay upon them; by this he endeavoured to bring down God's blessing on the desolate sanctuary, and bring souls who had rebelled back to God.

Truly, it may be said of us as it was of the Jewish Church; for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, we are become a

reproach to all that are round about us. And if there be one token against us it is this, that amidst all our schemes for doing good, the ancient way of God's saints and servants, of confession, and penitence, and prayer, is most overlooked. We little think how much we are benefited, how many a good thought and holy desire we owe to the prayers and tears of those we have never seen in the flesh. People are every where busy and excited, and endeavouring to build up God's Church by human laws and societies, and to provide for perishing souls by what you term scholarship, as if the sin and neglect of ages past could be undone by what we may call "literature."

But no, my brethren; if ever it shall please ALMIGHTY GOD to build up His Church, and bring it to bear upon men's souls as a living system, to convert the old from the sins of their fathers, and to train the young, notwithstanding bad example, and to make each understand in his measure what it is to have a soul, and to bring him to ask himself again and again, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul, it will be not by civil establishments, nor by what is called education and teaching children to read, no, nor by mere sermons, but by the unseen confessions and prayers and tears of saints and penitents, many of whom, in all ages, have gone from us, but whose holy earnestness has come up as a memorial before God, and is working His good work amongst us still. A broken heart can often best feel for others: a soul which lives in the light of God's countenance can best enter into the souls of others, and win souls to CHRIST: a watchful conscience can best touch and guide the consciences of others. One single book of Confessions, in which but one single broken heart has been laid open, for the good of God's Church, as it lay open before the All-seeing GOD HIMSELF, has done more to kindle other hearts, and make men understand what a "soul is," and a conscience, and what we all are, and why we are here, and what is our business here, and our prospect in eternity, than will be understood till that day when all kindreds and nations and people and tongues shall be gathered before the Throne, and manifested before men and Angels. This thought cannot but be most consoling and encouraging to any one who would cleanse his own heart in secret, and pray to his FATHER which seeth in secret, and have, he may think, but little means of doing good.

When we read such an awful sentence as the text, "Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" when, I say, we read and meditate upon such an overwhelming sentence, and think how many souls since Adam have so swiftly passed away from this world of trial into the unseen world, and see them passing away one by one from our side, young and old, parents and children, and all who remain amongst us so strangely and mysteriously bound together, and influencing one another for good or for evil to all eternity;—no wonder men should endeavour, half-scared, to make great plans, to contemplate doing much, and on a great scale; hoping thus to work upon a mass. Yet, let each bring home this truth; who shall say how much may be done by God's blessing by one broken heart, by converting one sinner from the error of his way, by making one hearty penitent, by watching and training one little child's conscience to live as in God's presence, by making one soul understand what it may be to live for ever or die for ever, to bear its own burden before the judgment-seat of CHRIST?

How much more should we be doing for you and your children, than clothing them and teaching them to read, if we could lay to heart ourselves, and bring you to understand what our office is as "watching for souls," as having what is called "cure of souls!" How much might each in his sphere do towards turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of all to the great GOD and FATHER of all, if we could by His mercy persuade but *one* to think and speak and act amongst others as an immortal soul, always as unto GOD; to train his heart and conscience to say inwardly, and feel inwardly, and digest inwardly, the words of the holy Psalmist, in which more than in any other perhaps this deep truth is contained, and which he will do well to meditate upon day and night, as the voice of a soul crying out of the deep to the FATHER of the spirits of all flesh:—

"O LORD, THOU hast searched me out, and known me: THOU knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; THOU understandest my thoughts long before.

“THOU art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways.

“For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but THOU, O LORD, knowest it altogether.

“Whither shall I go then from Thy SPIRIT? or whither shall I go then from Thy presence?

“If I climb up into Heaven, THOU art there: if I go down to Hell, THOU art there also.

“If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;

“Even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.

“If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me; then shall my night be turned to day.

“Yea, the darkness is no darkness with THEE, but the night is as clear as the day: the darkness and light to THEE are both alike.

“Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts.

“Look well if there be any wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

SERMON CCXXII.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

PART II.

EZEKIEL xviii. 4.

“ Behold, all souls are mine ; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine : the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

I REPEAT this very awful sentence again, because it is one which of all others I would have you deeply consider and lay to heart. It awakens thoughts too deep to dwell on, about the souls that are departed, whose trial is over, and who await in the world of spirits their final award on the right hand or on the left of the judgment-seat of CHRIST.

Every thought of them is full of mystery, and must awaken the deepest feelings of awe and tenderness. Of some we are told, in the touching lesson of All Saints' Day, “ The souls of the righteous are in the hand of GOD, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die : and their departure was taken for misery : but they are in peace.” We remember them at GOD's altar ; we bless His holy Name for all His servants departed this life in His faith and fear, beseeching HIM to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of His heavenly kingdom. They are, as we say in our prayer, delivered from their earthly prisons, from the burden of the flesh. We speak of them as we stand at the graves of our departed brethren ; as the spirits of them that depart hence in the LORD, as the souls of the faithful ; as those that sleep and rest in CHRIST ; and pray for ourselves, who are

yet each on his trial, that when we depart we may rest in HIM, and at the general Resurrection we may be found acceptable in His sight, and receive that blessing which His well-beloved SON shall then pronounce to all that love and fear HIM; saying, "Come ye blessed children of my FATHER, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." All these, from the soul of righteous Abel, the first who died in GOD's favour, to those who are last gone from us with the seal of faith, and who now rest in the sleep of peace; all, however once mixed up with others in this strange and mysterious world, as pastors and flocks, as kings and subjects, as fathers and children, and brethren and companions and friends, all are in His keeping, who says in the text, "All souls are Mine." They are in an especial and unspeakable sense His, and none shall pluck them out of His Hand: all live unto HIM, and "they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels," in that world where HE shall be all in all.

Again, no less is there a fearful sense in which HE the righteous Judge, by Whom all must be judged without respect of persons, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, may be said to include in this awful sentence, "All souls are Mine," the souls of the wicked and impenitent. Over these, indeed, a dark veil is drawn. It is said of Judas, when his place among the Apostles was to be filled up, that he had gone "to his own place." More than this we know not, nor may we know, nor need we know. It is enough that as saints have an earnest of their final rest and consummation in bliss, both in body and soul, so sinners, who know not GOD, and obey not the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, have an earnest of what it is to be banished eternally from His Presence.

However, all these souls are departed: we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us; and every moment, as the course of the world goes so rapidly on, every moment, I say, while I speak, some soul is being added to their countless number, is going hence to be no more seen. Every day and hour the earthly trial of every living soul is drawing to its close; and according as it shall have passed that trial, it shall "be with CHRIST in Paradise," or shall "go to its own place," to await the last great day. We shall all, we know not how soon, go to them; they shall

not return to us. But if they could speak to us, and from the unseen world ; if they could warn those whom they would most care to warn, how would they not enforce upon us the meaning both of this awful sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die ;" and of that blessed assurance which we hear so often and so heedlessly, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive!" Amongst them are our forefathers, from whom we may think we inherit much evil ; we have their sins visited upon us, and are fallen by their iniquity. Doubtless, when they were here, they thought the same of those who had gone before them ; but the moment the soul knows what it is to have an earnest of God's Presence, whether for good or for evil, whether in mercy or in judgment, in proportion as a soul really knows what it is to be naked and open in the sight of an All-seeing Judge, all these thoughts must pass and melt away. Alas ! my brethren, how little will such excuses avail us in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every soul shall bear its own burden before the judgment-seat of CHRIST !

Consider, too, if we have had the sins, the evil nature, the evil influence, and evil example of the wicked, have we not each, also, the prayers and tears, and good example of the righteous who have gone before us ?

Is all evil which we inherit from the past ? If ALMIGHTY God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate HIM, does HE not show mercy unto thousands of generations in them that love HIM and keep His commandments ? Does not the merciful kindness of the LORD endure for ever and ever upon them that fear HIM, and His righteousness upon children's children, even upon such as keep His covenant and think upon His commandments to do them ?

As we are so ready to lay our sins at the door of others, ought we not also to think with gratitude how many a good thought and holy desire we owe, under ALMIGHTY God and His good SPIRIT, to the secret intercession of those who are gone from us, and whom we have never seen ? This is a very touching and most tender thought, and I am sure must be a very right and true one. When the great Saint Augustine, I mentioned last

Sunday, whose broken heart has touched so many hearts in all ages and all countries, was converted, and poured out his broken heart before God, he did not lay his sin at the door of others; yet he seems to have remembered with deep affection and gratitude the prayers and tears and holy conversation of his mother. He confessed his own sin as his own: of his conversion he gave God the glory, and treasured up the remembrance of her as the pious instrument in His hands towards effecting it.

And, oh! that all would lay to heart this. If it, indeed, be true, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children,—if one generation does wrong, and the next suffers for it,—what would those fathers do if they were again amongst us? would they not be in earnest to live unto God, and save their own souls? What would they say to those they best loved? Would they not bid them live unto God also, and say, again and again, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Nay, I would appeal to parents now living; to those souls who are living wilfully and consciously without God in the world; who, so far as their own evil influence and example are concerned, are treasuring up wrath and misery against their dying day for themselves, and entailing it upon those who are dependent upon them, and come after them. Are they not, after all, conscious before God that they are souls, and are doing wrong? and are they not, after all, in their secret hearts, in His Presence from whom no secrets are hid, really desirous that, in spite of their own recklessness, their children should be trained, as Christian souls, to live unto Him, and be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Yes, I say, to every such parent or elder person, who may have influence over others, and may have had all the disadvantages of bad training and bad example, I put it to him whether, if he chose to own it, he is not more or less conscious what he is doing; whether he has not sometimes misgivings about his way of going on; and whether he does not think that, when he comes to die, and is left alone with God, he will be inclined to confess it, and entreat his children, as they stand at his bedside, to save their own souls, to break off their father's sin, and shun his example?

If so, each is much nearer being able, than he may think, to

understanding the full force of the words of the living God in the text: "As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine." And thus when we, as watching for souls, call grown-up persons to repentance, and train children to know the God of their fathers, we may commend ourselves to every man's heart and conscience in the sight of God. When we speak to each as a single independent being, an immortal soul on its trial for eternity, they are few who do not know and understand, more or less, what we mean. When we say that,—however we are bound together as souls, and are dependent on each other as members one of another, in the Church of the living God, tied together as families, as neighbourhoods, as friends and companions in this house of our pilgrimage; however we compare ourselves among ourselves, and bear one another's burdens,—and weep together, and rejoice together;—yet that each, after all, must prove his own work, and bear his own burden, and have his rejoicing in himself alone, and in what he is before God, and not in another,—When, I say, knowing the terror of the Lord, we appeal to men by such arguments,—as we are manifest to God, as God is witness of what we say, so are we manifest in their consciences,—He is witness in them that what we say is true. In a word, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Every one, be his condition what it may, be his calling what it may, may and must abide in that calling with God; and every one shall give account of himself to God. As truly as the Church is all one family for whom Christ died, and built together of the souls of men, as lively stones, to be an habitation of God through the Spirit, so truly is each a soul for whom Christ died, as truly as if there had been none other; and each, singly, however awful the thought, a temple of the Holy Ghost. How fearfully, then, in all we say, are we manifest unto God, and must we be manifest in your consciences! All and each are souls; and all and each are His.

When Nathan brought home his startling parable to David's conscience in the words, "Thou art the man!" his conscience answered in a moment, "I have sinned against the Lord;" as he says, yet more fully, in the fifty-first Psalm, "Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou

mightest be justified in Thy saying, and clear when THOU art judged." He makes mention, indeed, of his sinful nature, as derived from the sin of Adam, visited upon all his children:—"Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me." But this is not in order to excuse himself, or reply against GOD, and say in his heart, "Why hast THOU made me thus?"—it is only to own, yet more unreservedly and entirely, that he has yet a conscience. He speaks as one who had known what GOD required, yet had acted against it, and resisted His gracious will: "But, lo," he continues, "THOU requirest truth in the inward parts, and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly."

And what, then, is the duty of every soul? To think less than most are apt to do of outward circumstances; not to dwell upon what his father was, nor upon what his neighbours are, but to examine himself, and that not lightly, and after the manner of a dissembler of GOD; and to see what he really is himself in the sight of GOD, who trieth the hearts. Not every one that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the LORD commendeth. "If our heart condemn us, GOD is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." HE hath set all our misdeeds before HIM, and our secret sins—sins which we know not or have forgotten—in the light of His countenance. Nothing can be more searching and more awful than the way in which His Presence is represented to us. "The Word of GOD is quick," i. e. full of life and energy, "and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: for all things are naked and open," laid bare and dissected, and exposed to view, "in the sight of HIM with whom we have to do;" to whom we must give account at the last day. No doctrine surely can be more awful than this: yet, in fully laying this to heart, lies all our comfort here and hereafter.

It is this mysterious, unseen power over the bodies and souls of men; this wonderful knowledge which GOD has of all that we think, and say, and do, that has been so full of unspeakable terror to some, and of unspeakable comfort to others, from the beginning. This it is which has made life so burdensome

and death so terrible to every soul that doeth evil, and both life and death so blessed to every sincere and true servant of GOD, to every soul that seeketh HIM. It was this consciousness, that there was an Eye upon them, which made Adam and Eve, the first souls that sinned, run to hide themselves among the trees of the garden; and made Cain, the next soul that sinned, cry out, as he stood convicted by his own conscience in his CREATOR'S sight, and went out from His Presence, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, THOU hast driven me out from the face of the earth, and from Thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond upon the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me." It was, on the other hand, this self-same consciousness of GOD'S Presence which made Enoch's life unlike other men's lives, and his end unlike theirs. "Enoch walked with GOD:" walked, that is, in the light of His countenance, and in constant communion with HIM; "and he was not, for GOD took him." As St. Paul says, Enoch was translated that he should "not taste of death," having had in life this testimony,—“that he pleased GOD.” And such was Noah's life also. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with GOD." And hence it was that Abraham was "called the friend of GOD." And what was said of those first "souls that sinned," and of those first souls that had this testimony, that "they pleased GOD," is true of every single soul of man from that time to this, according as it has lived without or with GOD in the world:—"Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in GOD."

Thus it was that when the WORD of GOD, the Eternal SON of the FATHER; HE in Whom was life, and that life was the light of men; when HE was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and was, as had been foretold, "GOD with us," and went in and out amongst us, His holy Incarnation brought home to every single soul that came near HIM the doctrine of the Psalmist,—“O LORD, THOU hast searched me out and known me; THOU knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; THOU understandest my thoughts long before; THOU art about my bed and about my path, and

spied out all my ways." HE knew what was in man; JESUS knew their thoughts; and when a man said one thing and meant another, HE answered not the word but the thought. HE shewed men to themselves; shewed them what the soul is, naked in the sight of GOD.

When you read the New Testament, read it with this view: remember what the woman of Samaria said, when HE told her how she was living:—"Come, see a MAN which told me all things that ever I did." When you read a chapter, or hear it read, a parable or a miracle, do not read it as a mere history or a dead letter, but as the Word of the living GOD speaking to your inmost conscience: read it as the Word of HIM who said, "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life:" and wherever you are, whether at home or at work, whether in your chamber at night or in the fields by day, commune with your own hearts, and search out your spirits; say, again and again,— "THOU, GOD, seest me: THOU hast searched me out and known me." Do this day by day; and thus may you learn to say, not with terror but with comfort, when you come to die, "THOU art with me."

When you come here to worship and to hear GOD'S Word, worship and listen each of you as in His Presence, and do not look upon what is said as addressed to you all in a mass; do not apply what you hear to your neighbours; let every soul bring it home to himself. So account of us, as ministers of CHRIST, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, by itself, in the sight of GOD. It is a blessed thing, indeed, to assemble and meet together, and with one mind and one mouth to glorify GOD; a blessed time, indeed, it *was* for Christians, when the whole multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; a blessed time, indeed, *shall it be* when all shall be one, one fold and one SHEPHERD, and GOD All in all. Meanwhile, I say to every man that is among you, singly, if souls are ever to be so brought together, it will be by each soul being brought to understand what it is in the sight of GOD. HE can make men to be of one mind in a house, by turning the hearts of all at once as the heart of one man; or by drawing heart after heart to HIMSELF, and touching conscience after conscience by His SPIRIT.

I say, then, to every man that is among you, when you come

to worship, worship as an immortal soul, in the Presence of GOD, and on the brink of eternity; not forgetting that all the souls with whom you worship are His; that your GOD is their GOD. HE is thy LORD GOD, and worship thou HIM: HE is a SPIRIT, and the FATHER of the spirits of all flesh: pray to HIM at Church and at home, in spirit and in truth; and in your daily life, live as an immortal soul on its trial, every moment in the Presence of an All-seeing JUDGE. Think of souls departed to whom you may have done good or harm, and consider that all which are yet on their trial, all with whom you are thrown from day to day,—fathers, children, brothers, companions, and fellow-labourers,—are *souls*, and that those souls are His; each is a soul for whom CHRIST died, and in whom His SPIRIT is present; and may be influenced, *He only knows how deeply*, by every thought, and word, and deed, and even look of yours.

So may every soul learn what it is to *be* a soul, a soul sanctified; to have a conscience enlightened to know GOD, and a heart to love and dread HIM; and may learn by degrees the great secret,—how to bear that Eye which is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. So may every soul learn to abide in its earthly calling with the Unseen and All-seeing GOD, and understand what that means, “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth unto himself; but whether we live, we live unto the LORD, or whether we die, we die unto the LORD; so that, living and dying, we are the LORD’s;” and feel the depth of that prayer, that “our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved to the coming of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.”

SERMON CCXXIII.

RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

PSALM xxxiv. 11—16.

“Come, ye children, and hearken unto me: and I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips, that they speak no guile. Eschew evil, and do good: seek peace, and ensue it. The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers. The countenance of the LORD is against them that do evil, to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.”

THERE is a great deal thought in these days, and a great deal said without much thought, about education, about teaching the young. When thoughtful Christians look at the state of grown-up people in any neighbourhood, how very many are living utterly careless and reckless lives, without God in this world, and without any hope for the next; spending their time and money in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, till their consciences become seared, their hearts hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and their whole souls dead to God:—when thoughtful Christians *see* this, and yet more, when they *consider* it, they are almost dismayed and overwhelmed at it.

Well may they be dismayed and awestruck; and if they have not only Christian thoughts, but Christian hearts and Christian feelings also, all but broken-hearted—for here are not only creatures of the same flesh and blood as themselves, going down by millions into the grave, not only immortal souls dropping one by one every moment out of sight, and going we know not where;

but members of CHRIST, of the same body with themselves; children of GOD, and so brethren of the same family with themselves; and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven, and so fellow-travellers with themselves through this world of trial to the eternal world beyond, spending a few sad years of sin and sorrow here without a thought why they were placed in this world, or whither they shall go when they are called to leave it.

Were we really one body, one family, all brought up under our Heavenly FATHER'S eye, walking by the same rule, minding the same thing, and alive to our high and holy privileges, we should feel this, feel it most deeply and acutely. Many of you must have felt before now, too deeply to allow of your dwelling upon it, what it is to have a relation, or a friend, or an acquaintance who cared little for GOD or eternity, suddenly snatched away by death, and hurried away without warning to judgment. And what must be the thought to a Christian, that some one of the great family, some brother, though unknown, *still a brother*, is dying every moment, and passing whilst we are speaking into the unseen world of spirits! What each one's life has been, what his opportunities have been, what his early training was, what he might have been, what he ought to have been, where he is, and what he is now he is gone, is known only to HIM, who says in two or three thrilling words, "all souls are mine," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die." All we know is, that the sin of every soul is, in proportion to the light it has received and resisted, made exceeding sinful: the more each has received, the more it will have to answer for; the greater its opportunities have been, the more fearful will be its judgment, and the heavier its final sentence.

Now consider, my brethren, as you love your own souls and the souls of your brethren, consider, that of those countless millions of Christians who, in various ages and various countries have lived godless lives, and have died hopeless, or all but hopeless deaths, and who are passing one by one at this very moment in which I am speaking and you are listening, into the unseen eternal world of spirits unprepared; of all these, there is not one of whom it might not once be said, "He lusteth to live, and would fain see good days." This was common, we may be sure, to them all; the love of life—the prospect of a long life and a happy one—this was common to all, young and old, rich and poor; and

yet, what *is* life, which all love so much, and so dread to part with?—something so very, very frail and subtle, that no one could ever describe it, or make out what it is, and of which the truest and most touching account is that of St. James, where he forbids us to look onward to to-morrow: “For *what* is your life? it is even a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” And what are the “good days” we fain would see. Hear the touching account of them given by the Patriarch; “Few and evil are the days of the years of my pilgrimage:” and by the Apostle; “the days are evil.”

The question is, what could alone really have satisfied this love of life? Amidst a scene of death and mortality, what could have made these evil days “good days?” Nothing we may be sure on earth, nor of earth; not what is called scholarship; not reading, and writing, and cyphering, and learning the Bible by heart; not what is called education, by which some are apt to think life is bettered, and good days secured. Do you think, that when the rich man wished Lazarus to be sent to his poor brethren from the world of spirits, it was to have them made scholars—to do with them no better than we are doing, when we teach them to read and write, and learn by heart? no, he would have had that taught them which should make them holier and better men, keep them from the place of torment, and fit them for Paradise. The souls who are gone from us, are, next to our God and SAVIOUR, Whose they are, best judges of what training should be.

We may say, indeed, of many, nay, of most who have gone before us, that had they been better taught, and better trained, they might have lived a better life, and died a happier death; but this innate “love of life,” and desire of “good days,” nothing could satisfy amidst a world of sorrow, but the abiding favour, and good pleasure, and loving-kindness of God here, and that which JESUS CHRIST brought to light by the Gospel—the promise of eternal life and a blessed immortality. Thus the Psalmist sings, in His pleasure is life,—His loving-kindness is better than the life itself: and the Apostle tells us, that if in *this* life only the Christian has hope in CHRIST, he is of all men most miserable; that this is the promise which HE hath promised to us, even *eternal* life; not long life on earth, nor good days in this world, but eternal life. Hence it is clear, that the teaching and training

which the Christian needs, is such as will not only carry him through things temporal, but may also fit him for things eternal; a training, such as will enable him, not only to do his part well here, and live respectably, and die peacefully, but such as may be an earnest and preparation for Heaven. And what alone can do either?—Godliness. It is said of godliness, that it hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come; yet which is to come first, be the main object for which we live? this temporal life, or that which is eternal? I suppose the words of St. Paul mean much the same as our LORD's great rule of living; Seek ye first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, and all outward things shall be added unto you: seek the life which is to come, and the life which now is shall go well. However the course of this world may go, you will not much remember the years of your life, because GOD will answer you in the joy of your heart. HE will make all things work together for good to them that love HIM.

In the world the days are always evil days; in HIM they are always good days. In the world we shall have tribulation, in HIM we shall have peace. Abraham had good days, but it was from within that they were so. His days outwardly, when he left his country and kindred, when he went in search of food, were evil. St. Paul had "good days," even in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness. The LORD HIMSELF had not what we call good days in this world of sin and sorrow; HE had not where to lay His head; HE was all His life-long a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; HE took upon HIM the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He closed a life of poverty and contempt with a death of torture and ignominy. And is the disciple to seek to be above his MASTER, the servant above his LORD? Are we, with this example before us, to look for a long life, and a happy one on earth? Surely not. What have we to do but to trust to His promise, that so long as we are followers of HIM, and that which is good, imitating His example, and keeping His commandments, nothing shall harm us, nothing shall really hurt us which does not separate us from HIM. We shall have no need to fear any thing in this world, if only we sanctify the LORD GOD in our hearts; recognizing His gracious Presence within us, and looking through the

trials of this present time to the glory which shall be revealed in us, when this our vile body shall be fashioned like unto CHRIST'S glorious body, according to that mighty working, whereby HE is able to subdue all things to HIMSELF. This blessed sight—the sight of CHRIST our GOD and SAVIOUR, and being made like HIM in His eternal and glorious kingdom, this is the only true end and consummation, of that “love of life” and “desire of good days” which so many look for here below, and make it the object of their teaching and training. Some persons are glad to make their children scholars, to fit them, as they say, for life, and to see them thrive and prosper. Such, however, never will be the view of those who truly lay to heart what I have been alluding to—the godless lives, and hopeless deaths of Christians, and who consider the great end for which we are created, and redeemed, and sanctified. Words cannot describe the vanity of all things here below, except so far as they bear on our eternal condition. A few years, and what will it matter to each of us where he lived, so he lived unto CHRIST? where or how he died, so he died unto CHRIST? what has been his scholarship, so he has been a disciple of CHRIST? If to him to live was CHRIST, to die was gain, and to rise again is life everlasting. If it was to live only to this world, he has his reward, he has received his consolation; he is gone to his own place.

The end of the Christian, the true end of his love of life, and of his desire to see good days, is simply the sight of CHRIST. And what then is his training and education to be, amidst a world of trial and temptation?—a training of an immortal soul for life and immortality, the training of a child of GOD in this world, to be a child of the resurrection in the next.

And this is the holy discipline described by the holy Psalmist, together with this mention of the love of life and happiness, which it is the business of CHRIST'S Church to give. No words can represent more affectingly what Christian education should be, as described by the pure wisdom which is from above, as contrasted with that low view of it which is talked of by the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of this world, earthly, sensual, devilish as it is, says, ‘What has a man to do but to live, and do as well as he can in the world? I will do the best part I can for my child; I must make him a scholar, and then he must

take his chance.' How different the view of Heavenly wisdom in the text, beginning with the training, not of the understanding, but of the heart and conscience from the earliest childhood; with the government of the tongue, with the watching of the thoughts: with that fear of the LORD which is the beginning of all wisdom, and which, in the beautiful words of the wise man, "tendeth to life," and "prolongeth the days!"

Hear the call of the Psalmist, or rather of CHRIST by his mouth:

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: and I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

"What man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days?"

I will teach you that fear of the LORD which tendeth to life, and prolongeth the days; which will give you peace and security in this life and fit you for another and a better, for a long life, even for ever and ever.

Take them as the words of our Heavenly FATHER, speaking to us His own adopted children in CHRIST JESUS. Take them as the words of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, speaking to those which were objects of His tenderest interest and compassionate care when on earth, little children, calling them to HIMSELF, not only to be blessed by HIM, but to learn of HIM. Or take them as His words addressed to grown-up people, disobedient children, and needing conversion, who, except they repent and be converted, and become as little children, shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, who have fallen from the grace of Baptism, fallen from their first love; who have to unlearn the evil habits of their riper years, and to go back with broken hearts to the lessons of their childhood.

How inexpressibly touching and solemn they are, as addressed to such children of God, old or young, by their God and SAVIOUR: "Come ye children, hearken unto ME." Some, who though disobedient children, are called His children still; others, who are yet His. This makes the well-known familiar words of the Psalmist ring in our ears, and thrill through our hearts. Many have been blessed even here beyond all we could desire or deserve; yet we who are older, and who all well remember the time when we looked forwards to a long life, and a happy one, now that the prospect is fast vanishing from before us, we

have lived long enough to learn how little there is in this life to satisfy the longings of an immortal soul; how far we are from true happiness at best. Yet have we a sort of consciousness that our enjoyment even of this poor transitory life might have been greater than it is, our view of death more cheerful, and our prospect in eternity brighter, had we loved knowledge and chosen the fear of the LORD; had we sought peace where it is to be found.

Are we not just so far discontented and unhappy, have made life wearisome, and our days evil, as we have failed daily to live in His holy fear, to think, and speak, and act, as in His Presence, to live unto HIM, and pray unto HIM, and hold communion with HIM, as conscious that His eyes are ever over the righteous, and His ears open unto their prayers? Has not the fear of the LORD, which might have been a filial, affectionate, reverential fear, now become, to many of us, what we, by our sins, have made it, a fear which hath torment? Is not what should have been the loving, confiding fear of a tender FATHER, now the fear of a righteous JUDGE? Yet well were it for such to understand the terror of the LORD, so it may bring them to repentance, and lead them back, like the prodigal, to His fear and love.

Think, each of you, how much evil he has spoken, how much evil he has done, how much good he has left undone, how much time he has lost, how many prayers he has neglected; of how many sins, both in thought, word, and deed, he has been guilty, under God's eye, and in God's hearing, which, had he really known what the true fear of GOD is, what His Presence is, what it really is to have His Eye over us, or His Face turned against us, he never could have done. Life is a burden to many an one whose conscience may tell him he has made it so; he complains of the times, without seeing and owning the share he may have had in making them what they are; how much good one single sinner destroys; how the idle words of one, the blasphemies of another, the falsehoods of another, the malice of another, the drunkenness of another, the dishonesty of another, the impurity of another, the sloth and indolence of another, the neglect of public and private prayer and communion in others, make up the misery of an age or of a neighbourhood, and

render life to individuals so sore a burden, that they run away from themselves, and try to forget themselves in bad company, in eating and drinking, and gaming, till they become some in one way, some in another, but all from having lost the fear of God, reckless, *i. e.* neither knowing nor caring what becomes of them in this world or the next. Think, each of you, in what measure this has been his own case, how far by his own careless life, and evil influence, and bad example, he has brought misery on himself, and ruin on his family, and judgments on his neighbourhood, and done mischief which can never be undone to his own soul, and to the souls of others, whom, perhaps, he has never seen, but whom he must one day meet where all hearts shall be manifested, before the judgment seat of CHRIST.

Let each, I say, think of this; and if his conscience troubles him, and he shrinks from the thought, and is tempted to drown it, or to run away from it, and so go from bad to worse; if he has so lived as to make the thought of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come more than he knows at once how to bear: let him consider, that upon his bearing it, and making this the convenient season and accepted time to return to God, to confess his sins and forsake them, depends his everlasting peace. A happy life and good days, such as he once wished, and might have had, had he kept innocency, he cannot have, nor expect them: sorrow and weariness is the penalty he must pay for disobedience; he carries about with him a body of death. But this much he may be quite sure of, that the remainder of his life will only be so far truly spent at ease, and his remaining days, so few and evil, and those rendered fewer and more evil by past transgression, will be only so far rendered "good," as they are spent in amendment of life, in repentance for the past, in strictness for the future, in returning to God and making his peace with HIM; in learning to love His House and Presence; to be more instant and regular in prayer; and in living all the day long in His holy fear. He has gone wrong, and he is restless: "the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the LORD;" his only remedy is to trace the disease to himself, to probe the wound to the bottom; and instead of shrinking from the Eye which saw him stray, to arise at once and meet it as it watches for his

return, and pierces at this moment his very inmost heart; not to dissemble nor cloke his sins before the face of ALMIGHTY GOD, our Heavenly FATHER; “to arise and go to His FATHER, and say unto HIM, FATHER, I have sinned against Heaven and before THEE, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.”

“My son, hast thou sinned; do so no more; but ask pardon for thy former sins. Flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent,” you know too well by sad experience the sting it leaves behind, the deep wound it inflicts; how true those words of the Son of Sirach are—“If thou comest too near it, it will bite thee; the teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men!” And so far as you have any earnestness, any fear of the LORD left, you will lay to heart this also:—“He that hateth to be reprovèd is in the way of sinners;” and so must take his portion with them at last: but he that feareth the LORD, has any fear of the LORD left, “will repent from his heart.”

And now, then, if you who are older, who are parents, or have in any way charge of the young, can feel this exhortation speaking to *you* as unto children, as disobedient children, and calling you back to the fear of GOD, and the way of peace, which you have left; to repentance and watchfulness; how deeply ought you to feel it, as addressed to those who are *indeed* “children,” children in age and in innocence? In proportion as correction is grievous to you, because you have forsaken the way; as you have made GOD’s holy fear a terror, CHRIST’s light yoke a galling one, and His easy burden a heavy load, the keeping of His commandments grievous, and prayer itself irksome; you will feel, if you are tender-hearted, the necessity of applying all this holy discipline to keep those in the way who have not yet wandered from it. You will feel how much more than any scholarship it must be to keep little children from evil, and to bring them up in the fear, and nurture, and admonition of the LORD.

The penitence of parents, the great source of hope for themselves, is the source of hope also for their children. GOD only knows what you might have been; what have been your advantages, and how you have used them; your training may have been very poor, your opportunities very few; but you have *consciences*. And when we, knowing the terror of the LORD,—how awful death and judgment are to us all,—persuade you, as we are

manifest unto God in speaking, so are we, I trust, manifest in your consciences. And if, as we speak, they condemn you ; if you are conscious that you are so far uneasy, your lives unsatisfactory, your days evil, the thought of death and judgment all but intolerable, your prospects in time and in eternity blighted and dimmed, just in proportion as you have lost innocency and departed from the lessons of early childhood, and fallen in from thought, word, and deed, from the fear of the LORD, and so from the way of peace, let these little ones profit by your sad experience of evil. I know, indeed, that some, hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, are so jealous of the holiness of others, as to be bent on tearing them from God's service : an uneasy conscience will, if not directed aright, have this effect. A wilfully impenitent sinner will not be content without doing the devil's work in the devil's spirit, and trying to make others the children of hell like himself. Nay, he may come to hate and envy even the innocence of little children, and not bear that even *they* should be better than himself.

Yet is the sight of a little child more touching to the heart, more piercing to the conscience, than any sermon, to bid us return to GOD : a lesson to us as regards ourselves, bidding us be converted and become as little children, as we hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; and as regards these little ones themselves, to keep them unspotted from the world. They are fresh from the Hands of their CREATOR, and from the Arms of their most merciful SAVIOUR ; keep them as best you can in His Arms and in His Bosom, and train them up as ever under His searching Eye, and conscious of His sacred Presence. They are at the age when they most long to live and to see good days, and it is as natural for you to wish it for them, as for them to wish it for themselves. Train them, or suffer us to try to train them, in that holy discipline, which can alone secure it to them ; teach them the fear of the LORD, and so fit them to inherit His blessing. Reverence them as His, and as sacred to HIM. Keep their tongues, not only by precept, but by example, from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. Pray God to set a watch before your own mouths, and keep the door of your lips. Set before them His most blessed example, Who did "no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Keep them unspotted from the world ; their

hearts in the way of truth, and meekness, and righteousness ; their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Pray for them yourselves, and teach them to pray. Provoke them not to wrath, lest they be discouraged, disheartened, or hardened, by hasty words and unkind treatment. " Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD."

Remember, they have not only minds and memories, to read and understand, but hearts and consciences to mark and inwardly digest what they learn by heart ; not only minds and memories to make them scholars, but hearts and consciences to make them Christians, Christian disciples. They have *hearts* which need careful and tender nurture, to train them in the *love* of GOD ; and *consciences*, which need watchful examination, and strict admonition, to awaken them and lead them on in His holy *fear*. Remember, I repeat it, that they have not only *minds* and *memories*, but *hearts* and *consciences*, which must be trained in the love of their GOD and SAVIOUR, under a constant sense of His Presence. Thus must the young cleanse their way ; not merely by learning to read a chapter, or getting a Psalm by heart ; but by being watched and ruled first, and so taught to rule themselves, their hearts and bodies, their words and actions, after His word, and be wise for eternity. So far as *we* are helping towards this good end, in keeping their hearts pure, and their consciences clear, in training children to be single-hearted, and pure-hearted, and open-hearted, and tender-hearted, so far only are we doing good ; and so far as *you* help us in this good work, are you doing your Christian duty by them. In doing this, you are providing, not only for their welfare in life, but are laying the seeds of that peace which passeth all understanding, which this world cannot give nor take away : you are preparing yourselves and them for death and judgment, and for the " long life" and " good days" of a blessed eternity.

I know how hard all this is, and the harder in proportion as your own training has been poor, or, if good, in proportion as you have departed from it—how *very* hard it is to guide a soul into the way of peace.

Keep them, then, so far as in you lies, in God's Hands, where you placed them in Holy Baptism, in the arms of your SAVIOUR, by His side and under His eye ; and so, if you die before them,

and see them as Jacob saw his sons round the bed, you will better bear that last look ; you will feel deeply that you leave them in His arms, and trust them to His merciful care ; you will not be leaving them to go alone, but to hold them fast by GOD, taught in life and death to dwell under the defence of the MOST HIGH, and abide under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY. Or, if you lose them, how cheerfully may you commit their souls into the Hands of the faithful CREATOR and most merciful SAVIOUR. Ever remember, dealing with children is dealing with souls. Treat them through life, as remembering that their Angels do always behold the face of our FATHER which is in Heaven ; and so think of them, and speak to them, and speak before them, and act toward them, and in their presence, as you will wish to have done when you shall meet them at the last great day, before the throne of our SAVIOUR and JUDGE. . . . Oh ! my brethren, so let your light shine before them, that they may see your good works, and glorify in this world, and through the vast awful eternity, your FATHER which is in Heaven !

SERMON CCXXIV.

GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

EPHESIANS iv. 29.

“ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

OUR LORD said to His disciples, “ Ye are the light of the world.” HE had come HIMSELF as the Light of the world, to enlighten it by His most holy doctrine, and by His heavenly example. So we are told of those who heard His doctrine, that they “ wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth : ” others cried out, “ Never man spake like this Man.” Of His example it is said, HE hath done all things well ; when the WORD became flesh and dwelt among us, they beheld His glory, so far as man could see it, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and truth. Not, indeed, that all beheld His glory ; all who followed did not see the light either of His doctrine or His example.

But to a chosen few, who were least unfit to be near HIM, and least unable to receive it, HE communicated this light. His disciples shone by His light. HE was as it were the Sun ; they were to be like stars to reflect His holiness on others : they were to walk as HE also walked ; and were in their measure to be the “ light of the world,” and show by their every word and action in life Whose servants they were. They would only bring others to CHRIST in proportion as they partook of His light ; and thus it was His solemn charge to His disciples, and through them to

Christians in all ages,—“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your FATHER which is in Heaven.”

Thus, then, should Christians speak and act as children of light; i. e. as St. Paul explains it, “in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.” And as our LORD so solemnly said; “if the light that is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness!” i. e. if Christians are the only light of the world, and their light is gone out; if they neither walk in the light themselves, nor shine to others; how great and how hopeless is that darkness!

Again, our LORD told His disciples, that they were “the salt of the earth.” HE WAS HIMSELF the Holy One of GOD, and the source of all holiness in men. For this HE gave HIMSELF,—HE, through the Eternal SPIRIT, offered HIMSELF without spot to GOD, that HE might purify unto HIMSELF a peculiar people, zealous of good works. They who were near HIM when HE was here, felt in all they heard HIM say, and all they saw HIM do, how we ought to be holy, because the LORD our GOD is holy; and His disciples in all ages, as they profess to serve HIM and hope to see HIM, must strive, through HIM, to purify themselves even as CHRIST is pure. It is only in proportion as they are so, i. e. are pure and holy in all manner of conversation, in thought, word, and deed, that they can be said truly to be CHRIST’S, or can be the means of bringing others to HIM, and preserving them from the evil and corrupt ways of this miserable and naughty world. Salt preserves from corruption; and Christians, if they really see what is meant by being Christians, if they seek to be like HIM whose Name they bear, to have the mind which was in HIM, will be what HE called them, the “salt of the earth.” But then, as our LORD said, as sadly foreseeing what would one day take place, “If the salt hath lost its savour, wherewithal shall it be seasoned?” If Christians are the great means of preserving the world from corruption and ruin, and they have lost their Christianity, what is left, what hope is left for them or for the world?

I have sometimes thought that those who care to attend to what is said here, may have imagined that we take a very dark view of the state of things indeed; but I am sure no one can look at the Gospels, and at the tone of Scripture generally, and the fallen state of Christians, without seeing that such is a true

view. And with regard to this subject in particular, however mysterious it may be, can we doubt that if the witness which JESUS CHRIST has left of HIMSELF is His Church, and if Christians, as being members of His body, and His disciples, are "to be," indeed, "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth," the light has well nigh gone out, and the salt well nigh lost its savour.

To take one particular instance of this out of many; one special talent by which we may glorify GOD and our SAVIOUR, and edify one another, is the gift of speech. The tongue is called in Scripture, more than once, man's "glory." It is said, in the sixteenth Psalm, "My heart was glad, and my *glory* rejoiced;" and where St. Peter quotes these words in the Acts, in his sermon, it is said, "My heart rejoiced, and my *tongue* was glad:" so that the expressions, "my glory rejoiced," and "my tongue was glad," are the same; the one only explains the other. So, again, in the fifty-seventh Psalm; "Awake up, my glory; awake, lute and harp: I myself will awake right early." The holy Psalmist first calls upon his tongue, his glory, and then upon his harp, to praise GOD. And so, lastly, in the hundred and eighth: "O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready; I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have," i. e. with my tongue; that gift of speech which is our glory, in which we are above the rest of the creation, and only a little lower than the angels in worshipping and adoring our CREATOR. In all these cases we may observe how "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The heart is awake and alive unto GOD, and the tongue expresses what the heart first feels. As the first duty of the heart is to GOD, so is the service of the tongue due to HIM. "Oh, let your songs be of HIM, and praise HIM, and let your talking be of all His wondrous works!" Prayer and praise are the first duties of the tongue; its highest and holiest uses. How it is used it is awful to think; how much more in profaning GOD's holy Name than in praising it, how much more in cursing and swearing than in blessing HIM!

And I may here remark by the way, that this is why I wish to teach your children those most Divine prayers and praises, the Psalms of David. Those Christians whose light has most shone before men, and who have been most like the salt of the earth

in these last evil times, have all found these their great treasure, have used them night and day. And this is why I am anxious that we should all learn and strive to do our best to sing here at Church. Very poor indeed and unworthy must be our best; but still, if it is done really as unto the LORD and not unto man, and if all mind what they sing, and Whom they praise, and strive to sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also, and all join, we may, by God's mercy, learn how to praise HIM, not only with our lips, but in our lives, "speaking to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in our hearts unto the LORD;" and perhaps may carry something of the spirit of the prayers and praises which we utter here into the world. Certain it is, that unless we come here in vain, and worse than in vain, all that we say and do here should guide and influence what we say and do in common life. The tongue which prays to God here, should glorify HIM in all things: not that we need or ought to be always talking *about religion*, but that we must *never* say any thing inconsistent with Christian piety. A good and holy man is to be known as much by what he does *not* say, as by what he *does* say. To talk about religion may be easy to an irreligious person; but never at all to say an unholy thing, nor to speak in an irreligious tone, argues a holy and a truly religious mind.

This, however, seems to lead us to that second use of the tongue, which regards our communication with each other. We have seen how ALMIGHTY GOD would have us employ it to His glory. Let us see now how HE would have us turn it to the benefit of our neighbour.

And here, we may observe, HE forbids all bad use of it before HE enforces its true use. Our LORD HIMSELF has a very awful sentence on this subject; HE says, "I say unto you"—as if to call our special attention to it, "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Can it be that Christians, talking as they do, ever think of that sentence?—of course I do not mean open blasphemers, those who have cast off all fear of God, and all prospect of judgment, but I mean those who, as they would tell

you, and would fain persuade themselves, speak without thinking, and swear without meaning any thing.

Surely the tongue, which is the means by which we hold intercourse one with another, should be a means whereby we may edify one another. As Christians should be the salt of the earth, and by their example and influence should thus preserve all around them from corruption, so especially should they by this gift of speech. St. Paul evidently implies as much, where he says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;" and, again, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." But it is a most awful thought for all of us, how much harm may be done by one wrong word! I have often heard poor people, when they have wished to describe what they thought a good point in a person's character, say, "that they never, to their knowledge, heard him use a bad word." Now, though this will not necessarily prove so much as they think, yet it is a great thing: he who offends not in word goes far towards bridling his whole body;—it proves, one may believe, in these days a great deal, where it is true; for of how few, how very few can it be said! Wherever we go, it is the complaint, "the salt hath lost its savour." Christians, professed disciples of CHRIST, instead of speaking with new tongues, and ministering grace to one another, scarcely speak without injuring, perhaps polluting one another. Corrupt speech, "rotten speech," as it is literally in the original, taints soul after soul; idle words, filthy communication, foolish talking and jesting, things which ought not to be named amongst Christians, are people's common talk: evil thought after evil thought is communicated from one to another, till it is quite startling and terrible to think what men's minds and souls must be in the sight of HIM, Who searcheth all the imaginations of the thoughts, Who hath set all our misdeeds before HIM, and our secret sins in the light of His countenance.

And remember, so wonderful and fearful a thing is memory, and so prone are we to evil, that evil thoughts so wantonly uttered may do harm,—yes, even to their dying day, to the souls of those who hear them; and form part of that load of sin with which they will one day stand naked before the Judgment-seat of

CHRIST. The ruin, and misery, and destruction of souls and bodies, which takes place every day and every hour, among rich and poor; in colleges and schools, in cottages and in the fields, is enough to make any thoughtful person shudder to think of. How many a person wantonly utters to or before another what himself had better die than utter, and the other had better die than hear! And whereas to the pure all things are pure; Christians corrupt each other till nothing is pure to them; till they hate the very name of holiness, and become despisers of them that are good; till their very mind and conscience are defiled. And this spreads from country to country, and increases from generation to generation.

And, then, if such be the evil done by those who wantonly utter corrupt communication, what shall be said of those who print it; set it forth, not as a random thought, but as a deliberate one; not only for the ear to hear, but for the eye to dwell on? Those who are not innocent cannot endure that others should be so; who thus seem not content without making others twofold more the children of hell than themselves.

To those who live watchfully, and examine carefully and unsparingly what they have done and said in life, it must always be a most bitter and cutting thought to remember how they may have sinned in this way; how their foolish or idle words may have done harm to some who are, ere this, gone to their last account, and to others whom, perhaps, they have never seen; and to reflect, that a word once spoken can never be recalled; it is gone, —they know not whither. But to those who have written or printed it, if they ever come to think at all, it must be with unspeakable anguish; it has been a miserable feature in one or two death-beds which we know of. One very wicked and profligate man, who seems to have been a sincere penitent, found the thought of the harm, that he had done by his writings the hardest thing to bear. If he had blasphemed God, the misery was his own; and he might lay a really broken heart open before HIM; if he had in any other way wronged his neighbour, he might restore fourfold; but the thought which haunted him was, that what he had *said* and *written* would or might ruin soul after soul long after he was gone. All these thoughts are very awful, very terrible indeed, but there are few that are not in one way or other

concerned in them ; they may enable us to understand that very strong language of St. James, “ Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! The tongue is a little member, but it is a fire, a world of iniquity ; it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is itself set on fire of hell.”

I repeat it, these thoughts are very awful and very terrible, but they may, they must be profitable. Whom do they chiefly concern ? The elder and the young. The elder, as regards their own conduct, and as servants of CHRIST, first of all ; and next as regards their way of speaking to and before children. I say, elder people,—parents, for instance, and those who are grown up,—know by bitter experience that these things are true. I cannot but hope and think that there are numbers of persons who would give worlds, if they had them, to be able to forget many things they have seen and heard, and unsay much that they have said ; but if that may not and cannot be, let them remember those who are under their charge, and as yet unspotted by the world : let them treat young persons, speak to them, speak before them, train them, and do their best to help us to teach them and train them as “ members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.” A heathen once said, as a bad sign of evil times, that “ there was no reverence for childhood.” We ought surely to reverence the innocence of those who are fresh from the Hands of their CREATOR, fresh from the Arms of their SAVIOUR in Holy Baptism, and, above all, to remember His most solemn and affecting words, when HE set a little child before His Disciples :—“ Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in ME, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.—Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, That their Angels do always behold the face of My FATHER which is in Heaven.”

SERMON CCXXV.

EARNESTNESS IN WORSHIP.

PART I.

ECCLESIASTES v. 1.

“Keep thy foot when thou goest unto the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.”

THERE is no book more calculated to make us serious and earnest, if rightly understood and truly laid to heart, than the book of Ecclesiastes. There are, indeed, in the book many things of themselves hard to be understood, but the main drift of it is not at all hard to be understood; which is, first, to impress upon us the utter vanity of all that we are apt to think so much of—the things under the sun, and so to lead us to that of which we think too little—the world unseen; to make us feel the great solemn truth, that the time is short, the fashion of this world passeth away; that all go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn unto dust again; that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we are going,—each is going, he knows not how soon! However hard, therefore, many of the words of the Preacher are, and however dark some of his sayings are, thus much is, at least, easy and clear, that he is preaching to the world the vanity of all things under the sun. “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth like a shadow?” This is like the key note of the

whole strain; a sort of sad melancholy air, which seems, as we read or hear it, to pierce to the very inmost soul, and make us cry out with the holy Psalmist, "O, remember how short my time is; wherefore hast Thou made all men for nought?"

Any one who really ventures to look upon this world of sin and sorrow as it is, and to reflect how fast the fashion of it passes away, might sit down and read this book of Ecclesiastes, and listen to it like melancholy music, till he might almost dream his short vain life away, in meditating with a mixture of awe and astonishment on the frail, and uncertain, and perishing condition of all things under the sun. Some, perhaps, might be tempted to think nothing of any importance; as if, time being short, and life given us for enjoyment, we have little to do but to make the most of it, whilst it lasts. So did the impious, described in the book of Wisdom, "Reasoning with themselves, but not aright, they said, Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy. Our time is a very shadow that passeth away, and after our end there is no returning: Come on then, let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered;" i. e. "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." These words were written with an eye to those, who, before the coming of our LORD, chose to be unbelieving and dissolute. Because they must soon, very soon, leave the world, therefore they determined to lose no time, but gave themselves up, as many Christians do now, to lewd pleasures and riotous mirth, and plunged themselves deeper and deeper in sin. What passed across their minds was the extreme shortness of life, and precariousness of enjoyment: thus reasoned they with themselves, but "not aright." For what is the only real true lesson which the vanity of all things ought to teach us? the necessity of being deeply serious, and in earnest about the one thing needful—our religion; that only thing which is of any lasting consequence.

And thus he reasoned who reasoned "aright." The wisest man, who begins this wonderful book with the solemn sentence, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity," ends it by telling us what alone is *not* vanity, and what the vanity of all things else should warn us, while we have time, to embrace and hold fast—namely, true holiness, and its end everlasting life. "Hear," he

says, "the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments," for this is the whole, the whole duty, the whole happiness, or as it is in one word, "*the whole of man*," both in time and in eternity. For this he was created, for this he was born, and sent into the world, to live to God's glory, and to do His will; to this all his powers of body and soul should be directed, sanctified, and governed, "to fear God, and keep His commandments." And what is said of these? That they will last for ever. "The fear of the LORD is clean, and endureth for ever:" we are to serve HIM in fear and reverence here, as we hope to see HIM in that eternal world where Angels, his best and purest servants, veil their faces in His Presence. Again, "He that doeth the will of GOD abideth for ever," i. e. he who abideth in CHRIST, as a member of His Body, and guided by His Eye, and sanctified by His SPIRIT, has in him life, and a seed of immortality: to him GOD's commandment is life everlasting. Thus it is, that the Psalmist so touchingly says, contrasting our frailty and vanity with GOD's eternal never-failing mercy, and showing us our great business in this short life, to fear HIM, and keep His commandments: "HE knoweth whereof we are made, HE remembereth that we are but dust. The days of man are but as grass, for he flourisheth as a flower of the field; for as soon as the wind goeth over it it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more; but the merciful goodness of the LORD endureth for ever and ever upon them that fear HIM, and His righteousness upon children's children;" and he adds, "even upon such as keep His covenant, and think upon His commandments to do them."

I have said thus much about the Book of Ecclesiastes, from which the text is taken: it teaches us the vanity of things temporal, only to lead us on more earnestly to things eternal. Of this world, it says, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" of the next world, it might seem to say, "verity of verities, all is verity." Here nothing is real, there every thing is real; and whatever does not help us to this great end, "to fear God and to keep His commandments," and prepare ourselves for His Presence, and to abide His Judgment, is a dream, and something worse than a dream.

It is not merely that Heaven and earth shall pass away; but it is because we belong to a kingdom which shall *not* pass away, that

we are to serve GOD with reverence and godly fear. It is not merely because every man living is altogether vanity, but because each, during the few short years of his vain life, is on his trial, whether he will serve GOD or no, that his whole business is to keep GOD's Commandments. It is not that time is so short, but that Eternity depends on it; it is not that death is so certain, but that Judgment comes after it. This it is which makes every moment we have spared us, every thing we do, every word we utter, every thought we cherish, of so vast unutterable importance. It is because "GOD shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." It is because the things which are not seen are eternal.

We have seen that the great lesson of the book is, that *nothing* is of importance which does not in some way or other lead us more devoutly to "fear GOD, and keep His commandments." The next sentence, which tells us, that every thing we do shall be brought into judgment, makes *every thing* of importance, especially every act of religion, every thing we do, and say, and think. Whereas, the truth is, that what ought to be our best and most solemn acts in life, unless we are very careful indeed, may become "vanities," as much as the vainest. Thus, the Wise man seems to give specimens of things, which in themselves are vain, but which, by a holy use, may be turned to good account, and made not vain; *e. g.* riches, which, hoarded up, are vanity, and ill-spent, are vanity, but of which, spent well and in the fear of GOD, and according to His will, our LORD says, we may make to ourselves friends. On the other hand, he seems to warn us, that the most solemn acts in life, in particular the acts of religion, our behaviour in coming to GOD's House and Service, may be vanity itself: *i. e.* as the text calls it, "the sacrifice of fools," who neither know nor care what they are about, and so "consider not that they do evil."

Now, it is sad enough, that Christians cannot be brought, by laying to heart the vanity of all things, of the shortness of time, of the certainty of death and judgment, to fear GOD, and keep His commandments, and provide for eternity. But it is yet more sad to think, that those most solemn acts of their lives which should impress them most with the fear of GOD, and bring them most in sight of death and judgment, should be in any way trifled with, and made vain, or worse than vain. Yet that they

may be made so, and that there is danger of their being made so, is plain by every day's experience, and especially by the warnings contained in the first few verses of this chapter; at the head of which in your Bibles are these striking words, "Vanities in divine service;" and which he begins by saying, "Keep thy foot, take heed to thy foot, as thou goest to the house of GOD;" as if he would say, 'Stop as you go, think before you go, and think where you are going: remember how Moses and Joshua were bidden to put off their shoes in token of reverence when they stood in His Presence: stop as you go; as the Jews stopped as they passed the threshold and washed their hands.' And *we* might add: Remember how the LORD drove out those who profaned His FATHER'S house; remember you have to leave the world and its vanities behind you when you come here, and to come with clean hands and a pure heart: here you have but one thing to do, to realize to yourself that the LORD is in this place, to worship and fall down and kneel before the LORD our MAKER: take heed so to approach HIM, that you offend not, in word or thought.

There are a vast number of persons who never come to this House of GOD at all, who live wholly without GOD in the world; it is sad to think of *them*; but it concerns *you* to think whether, if they did, they would be led, by seeing you worship, to fall down and worship, and pronounce GOD to be in you of a truth. I do not know whether it is not quite as awful a thing that those who *do* set foot in it, should take so little heed to their feet when they come to the house of GOD, *i. e.* should come with so little thought beforehand what they are about to do; should enter into these holy places with so much irreverence and unconcern; should be "rash with their mouths" to utter any thing before GOD; should be so careless how they pray, or whether they pray at all; again, that they should be so little ready to hear, or take heed how they hear, so heartless in hearing and attending; nay, and that Christians should be renewing their vows at Confirmation, and afterwards, again and again, at Communion, without considering *beforehand* what they are going to do, considering *at the time* what they are about, or reflecting *afterwards* what they have been doing. Thus, not only all things in life are a dream, but their so-called religion itself is a mere dream and a shadow. In fact, unless these, which ought to be

our best acts, because they bring us most near to ALMIGHTY GOD; unless, I say, these really tend to this one great end, to make us more deeply reverent in His Presence, and more earnest in His service, what can they do but increase our condemnation? Our very prayers, unless we consider what they mean, will be "rash words;" nay, they will be "turned into sin;" nay, they may be made amongst the number of those "idle words," which we shall have to give account of at the Day of Judgment.

Let us, then, just weigh well the meaning of this solemn warning, given as it is in the midst of this solemn book. Let us in earnest lay to heart our condition as taught us in that book, the vanity of all things but serving GOD, viz. that we are poor frail creatures, in the midst of a world that is perishing, who hold our lives from breath to breath only at our CREATOR'S will; who have been preserved alive, we know not how, since last Sunday; who have walked here only by His power, in Whom we live, and move, and have our being; who stand here in His Presence, before whom the Angels veil their faces, and shall stand before HIM, face to face, when HE shall come to be our JUDGE. Let us cherish these thoughts, and such as these, and then may we understand what is meant by coming to Church; and why Solomon, who built the Temple, and has taught us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and that to fear GOD and keep His commandments is the whole of man, his very life, in time and eternity; why he has given us these solemn warnings and cautions about Divine Service:—"Keep thy foot when thou goest unto the house of GOD, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before GOD: for HE is in Heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." These are two or three of the cautions, which, coming where they do, may well teach us that it is a matter of no slight importance how we even come in and go out of Church; much more, how we all behave here.

Some people will say these are all forms; that the heart is the great thing; if that is right, what signify outward tokens of reverence. To which I answer,—True, the heart *is* the great thing, and Christians may make outward tokens of reverence, which the heart does not answer; may draw near unto HIM with

their lips when their hearts are far from HIM, and so worship HIM in vain, and hear His Word to no purpose. But, on the other hand, I say also, *if* the *heart* is right in this matter, the *body* will follow it; *e. g.* it would be what one would call *unnatural* for a man who could, not to kneel; the man who in heart fears GOD will listen to the caution, "Keep thy foot, take heed to thy foot, when thou goest to the house of GOD." He will follow the Prayers and hear the Word, not as a matter of form, but as intending to obey, to act up to what he hears, and to ask for strength to do it. In a word, he will desire to glorify GOD, both in his body and in his spirit, remembering that they are both of them GOD's.

Moses, when the ALMIGHTY appeared to him in the flaming fire in the bush, was bidden to "put off his shoes from off his feet," because the place where he stood was holy ground. Joshua, when the Angel appeared unto him, and he fell on his face on the earth at the sight, had the same command given:—"Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." When the people saw the cloudy pillar, the symbol of the Divine Presence at the Tabernacle, they rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. When our Blessed LORD was upon earth, those who came to HIM fell on their knees and on their faces, and sometimes stood afar off, and scarcely ventured to approach HIM. St. Peter himself shrunk from His Presence, as feeling himself a sinful man; and in all ages it seems as if nature itself told Christians that this deep awe and reverence was right. The noble and lofty Cathedrals and Churches which they built seem all to inspire it, and to cast us down to the dust as we enter them, built as places for His honour to dwell in; they force upon all the fact that we are in the Presence-chambers of the KING eternal, immortal, invisible; and at the footstool of the Most Highest! HE is as really present in every Christian Church consecrated to His service, the place which HE hath chosen to place His Name there, as HE was to Moses and Joshua, or as HE was in the Temple of old. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, CHRIST is as truly in the midst of them as HE was to those who saw and worshipped HIM, and to the assembled Disciples after His Resurrection, when HE came and vanished out of their sight.

Our pious forefathers, in earlier ages, who *were*, what *we* are *not*, reverent, knew what was due to GOD'S House and Service; and when they raised monuments to the dead, placed them in the postures in which they should alone, alive or dead, come into a Church, in acts of adoration, like Christians living and dying in the LORD. Yet how few really think of this: how few consider, that coming to Church is in any real sense coming into His Presence; that the confessions and prayers which they utter, they utter in His hearing; that the worship they render, they render in His sight, Who looketh not only on the outward appearance, but reads the heart through and through; that the commandments delivered in His Name were really uttered by HIM. Who comes in, as if he felt with Jacob, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I knew it not?" Who confesses his sins here or at home, as unto GOD? Who prays, as if he really wanted what he prays for? or listens, as if he really meant to obey? or vows, as if he meant to perform?

The truth is, that for want of really "keeping their feet, and taking heed to their ways, before they go to the House of God, Christians do go from Sunday to Sunday, without thinking why they go, and get so the habit of it, that they do not know that they do evil. They follow the Prayers without weighing or meaning what they say; they hear the Word without intending to do it, and make resolutions without intending to act up to them, till their religion is all, as the Wise man says, like a dream: they offer the sacrifice of fools; and yet are so far from "considering" that they are "doing evil," that they think they are "doing good:" that the mere "treading these courts of the LORD'S house," i. e. coming once a week, or more seldom, and standing in His Presence without feeling any fear or reverence, and hearing His commandments, without doing them, is even a good act, an acceptable service, to be *reckoned upon* when they come to die! and so they go on offering what the Prophet calls "vain oblations," and "treading" GOD'S courts, and deceiving themselves unto the end, and in the end.

To any wakeful conscience, to any one who really does take heed to this matter, it must be matter of serious concern how often he has trifled with GOD'S mercy; how often he has come unprepared to Church and Communion; how

often he has neglected both when he might have come; how often, when he has come, his thoughts have wandered, and he has gone home no better, but rather worse, than he came. Instead of this, how often does it happen that those who have been thus heedless and careless about it all their lives long, will cling to this on their death-bed, "that they were bred Church people, and have kept to their Church." Thus they will speak when they come to die; and why? Because they really never once thought what it *was* to come to Church; how much watchfulness, and reverence, and earnestness, it required; nor ever reflected that every time they came, a new account, as it were, was entered against them in His books, who has taught us, that to fear GOD and keep His commandments, is the whole of man; and that HE will bring every work, more especially such as these,—which *ought to be* our best, as done in His special Presence,—into judgment.

Now no one can say this is unimportant. Our first duty to ALMIGHTY GOD is "to fear HIM;" our first petition in the LORD'S Prayer is "Hallowed be Thy Name." With many, all they ever do towards obtaining this great end, "the fear of GOD and keeping His commandments," does, you well know, consist in coming here to Church on Sunday, and hearing His Word. If this, their best act, is done ill, what can be done well? if they see HIM not here, will they elsewhere? "No one," it has been well said, "comes out of Church the same as he went into it; he must be better or worse for it." To every one of these, then, most especially, I say, if you come, come in earnest; ask yourselves before you come, *why* you come. Enter into this House with awe and reverence, as if you were really about to die, and see your SAVIOUR as HE is; hear His Word, and listen to it as if your eternal life depended on obeying it; pray as a frail but immortal being, every moment in danger of judgment, and on the brink of an unseen and unknown eternity: think over again when you go home, what you have been saying and doing. Again, come not by fits and starts as it may suit your convenience, but regularly, as regularly as you go out to your daily work. Lastly, if you thus do come in earnest to Church, you will come to Holy Communion also; but here, yet more, I say, do not come without thought, and strict self-examination beforehand;

but when you come, come in earnest ; in a word, let all you do here be done in the true fear of God, and with the full desire to do His Will, though all the world be full of vanity ; so the House of God may be unto us, indeed, the gate of Heaven, and we may so serve HIM in His Tabernacle, that we at length may rest upon His holy Hill.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,—by which you are preserved alive this day, and permitted to stand in your SAVIOUR'S Presence, and through his infinite mercies and precious merits to draw nigh unto God,—to present your bodies, not only your hearts and souls, but your bodies also, your whole selves, every member and every faculty, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable, your only reasonable service. Glorify HIM both in your body and your spirits here, as you hope that HE will raise up and glorify both hereafter.

SERMON CCXXVI.

EARNESTNESS IN WORSHIP.

PART II.

ECCLESIASTES v. 2.

“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before GOD: for GOD is in Heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”

I HAVE endeavoured to show you that the book of Ecclesiastes, rightly understood, and laid to heart, is wonderfully fitted to make us deeply serious and earnest about that one only thing which is of any real and lasting importance to us—our religion. It seems especially designed, by impressing upon us the vanity of all things under the sun, to lead us to embrace and hold fast those things which shall survive when Heaven and earth shall have passed away. It conducts us on from vain earthly cares, and anxieties, and pleasures, to the fear of God and the keeping of His commandments, as being the “whole of man,” his whole duty, and whole happiness; the end for which he was born, and came into this world of trial and temptation.

I pointed out to you how very awful and solemn, and how humbling, the tone of this book is; pressing upon us throughout how all things around us, and we ourselves, together with them, are passing away like a dream; and that a time is coming upon each of us, how soon we know not, when nothing will avail us, but to have feared God and served HIM; when we shall have to stand naked in His Presence, Who made and Who can destroy both body and soul; Who sent us into the world to do His will, and Who will bring “every work into judgment, and every secret

thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." All this ought surely to make one very serious.

However, so it is, that, instead of learning these most concerning lessons from the vanity of all things, and becoming what ALMIGHTY GOD, by these warnings of Divine wisdom, would have them become, more serious, more earnest, about the one thing needful, men have reversed the order of things. Instead of going on from vain things to real things, they, from heedlessness, or from cowardice in shrinking from the truth, trifle with the most real things, till they turn them into shadows and vanities.

The "Preacher" would have us reflect who we are, and what we are, and where we are, and what is our business here, and what is our destiny hereafter, i. e. that we are poor frail sinful creatures, with our lives hanging on a thread, sent no doubt for some good and wise, but mysterious, purpose, into a world of vanity and temptation, where we are every moment on our trial, whether we will serve GOD or no; and every moment in danger of being called to account before HIM.

This is our real condition, whether we like to reflect upon it or no. Whether we be too heedless to reflect upon it, or too cowardly to bring it home to us, the matter is not altered; and every day's experience only serves to force upon us that all this is real, infinitely real. Daily experience teaches us the vanity of all things; our conscience tells us the rest.

If we understand this our frail condition, "all the days of our vain life, which we spend like a shadow," the certainty of death and of eternal judgment; then the necessity of deep awe, and reverence, and earnestness in GOD's service, will be also real to us; and then every thing which tends to inspire us with that awe and reverence, will be real to us also. Thus it was that we found this book of Ecclesiastes may well bring us to understand what is meant by going to Church, where, of all places, coming here and standing, as we do, in the special Presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, we should be filled with the Spirit of His holy fear, and seek for that Spirit of holiness, without which no man shall see HIM, and realize to ourselves the prospect of judgment.

If we are not reverent here, where shall we be reverent? If we are not in earnest in seeking after holiness here, where shall

we be in earnest? If we believe not that HE shall come to be our Judge here, when we say so solemnly we do believe it, where shall we stand when He appeareth? Hence it is that we find in the midst of this most solemn Book such warnings and cautions even about our way of going in and out of the house of GOD, about the temper and intention with which we go there, and about our whole behaviour there; cautions, lest, as every thing else is like a dream, our most solemn acts of religion may turn out to be like a dream also; and lest, as there are vanities in all other matters, there should be vanities also in that where all should be truth and reality,—I mean in Divine Service.

That many people's coming to Church and Holy Communion itself is no more than vanity or trifling all their life long, "a vain oblation," as the Prophet says, "a sacrifice of fools," as the Preacher calls it, is too plain to need dwelling on. And that they do not, all the while, "consider that they do evil," that they are doing wrong themselves, or harm to others, still less that they are rendering a most unacceptable service, nay, doing a mockery to their GOD and SAVIOUR, this is too plain also. They come from custom, or because they would be uncomfortable not to come; but they come often they know not why, and behave they care not how, and go home no better; nay, worse than they came.

It really does seem so necessary for those who do come, to think beforehand why they come, and to come, if they come, in earnest, that I dwelt a long time on the first words of these warnings against what are well called at the head of the chapter, "Vanities in Divine Service." "Keep thy foot when thou goest unto the House of GOD."

It is not a light thing to go to Church at all; and so I concluded by saying, Think what it is to go, before you set out; think what you are, and where you are, and where you are going, and why you are going: and, again, pause as you pass the threshold of the Church to consider what it is to come before the Presence of GOD. It is your first and highest wisdom to fear HIM; your first prayer that "His Name may be hallowed," i. e. that you may worship HIM as you ought to do. "Keep, then, thy foot when thou goest unto the House of GOD; and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools."

Next to this caution against heedlessness in entering into His Presence, is another caution, as necessary against rashness in speaking in His Presence. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before GOD: for HE is in Heaven, and thou upon earth." It may seem like a general caution "to take heed to our ways that we offend not in our tongue, to set a watch before our mouths, and keep the door of our lips:" and *that, every where*, because every where we are in His Presence, and ought so to speak every where as conscious that HE heareth us. Here, however, it is a special warning against a "vanity" in Divine Service. As Christians are heedless how they come to this holy place, so are they heedless what they say when they are here; in a word, they are "rash with their mouths."

It may seem very common-place to remind you of such things; but only just consider how many persons come to Church, and half-dream away the service. What danger there must be in drawing near unto GOD with our lips when our hearts are far from HIM, and more especially when, as is the case, people know not that they do evil!

The next thing, then, to taking heed to our feet, is to take heed to our tongue. As we must stop and recollect ourselves as we come to Church, and not rush into His Presence, so when we are in Church we must mind what we are about, must mind what our tongues say, and watch whether our hearts go with them. As we come into the LORD'S House only "upon the multitude of His mercy," so must we "worship in His fear towards His Holy Temple." If we were admitted to the presence chamber of an earthly king, we should be respectful and silent; how much more should we be so, when we come as miserable sinners, to ask pardon and forgiveness of the KING of kings and LORD of Lords! In some parts of Christendom, Cathedrals and Churches are kept open, that those who desire it may, as they pass, go in and silently pour out their hearts before HIM, and kneel, if it be only for a few minutes, in His Presence. A Church is to them quite a different place from every other, a place where they may leave off earthly thoughts, and stand, as it were, at the gate of Heaven. To kneel at the altar is to kneel at the footstool of the KING eternal, immortal, invisible, at the Mercy-seat, where our

unseen LORD and SAVIOUR is especially present; and you may learn from an example I will set before you, how we should behave ourselves in such a place.

It is related of King Charles the First, that when the news came of the death, indeed of the murder, of a favourite nobleman, His Majesty was at prayers, the public prayers of the Church, when the messenger came with a troubled countenance, and without any pause in respect to the duty they were performing, went directly to the king and whispered in his ear what had happened. His Majesty, it is said, continued unmoved, and without the least change of countenance, until the prayers were ended, when he went home, shut himself into his chamber, and burst into tears.—So deeply intent was he on the business he was about, and the words he was uttering; so well did he know what it is to come to Church and utter any thing before God. Had he come without thought, and entered without reverence, and been careless about what he was saying, how different would it have been! But it seemed as if one object filled his whole soul, and one business took up all his thoughts—the Presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, and the prayers he was uttering in that most sacred Presence. How well must he have “keep his foot” in going to GOD’S House! how little was he like a person “rash with his mouth, or hasty in his heart,” in this matter! Such was the deep devotion by which he learned in the midst of sad trials and troubles to receive them with reverence as from God’s hand, and to meet death itself with calmness and resignation.

Now observe what care is taken, lest we should be “rash with our mouths,” in any thing we say here. Because we know not what to pray for as we ought, nor how to pray aright, the Church, which knows the mind of CHRIST in this matter, supplies us with words, with confessions, with prayers, and thanksgivings; and lest our heart should be hasty to utter any thing before HIM, there are sentences and warnings at the beginning of the service to remind us, before we open our lips, what we are, and why we are met together, and where we are; that so, with a “pure heart and humble voice” we may, one and all, draw near to the throne of the Heavenly grace, i. e. the Mercy-seat, the footstool of the ALMIGHTY GOD, our CREATOR, REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER; where we kneel as miserable sinners to confess our sins past, and

ask for true repentance and forgiveness, and for His HOLY SPIRIT to amend our lives.

The temper with which we should approach HIM, is one of deep awe and reverence: the spirit in which we should pray is with a lowly, penitent, and obedient heart; and lest we should pray without due preparation beforehand, there are these warnings, the sentences, and the exhortation to prepare us: what we have first to do then, after hiding our faces as we come into GOD'S Presence, and secretly asking HIM to bless us, and help our imperfect service, is "to be ready to hear." We ought not to need such things; but if we only just listened as we should to the opening sentences, we should be in less danger of being rash with our mouths, and offering the sacrifice of fools. Observe, for instance, the opening sentence: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall *save* his soul alive;" does it not at once remind us, if we would only mark it, that unless we do so turn, we are in danger of *losing* our own souls, losing them to all eternity? And should not this thought convince us, that coming to Church is, indeed, what we may call a life and death matter; and every word we speak here of vast, infinite consequence, as uttered really by frail creatures, whose very soul is at stake? Again, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Hide Thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds;" does not this seem to be a warning, how deep and heartfelt our confessions should be? as if we should scarcely dare to look up, but stand at a distance like the Publican as we hear it, and say with him, "GOD be merciful to me a sinner!" And so of the other sentences; they are all sentences which we should be "swift to hear," and which, if we hearken to any one of them as we should, should make us "slow to speak," and force us to weigh our words. I do not say this can all be done at Church; but you may learn the lesson at home. I only point it out, because you so often hear these sentences, and may not have weighed them duly, and seen what they really mean, and how truly they might help to remind you who and what you are, and so prevent you from being in any way "rash with your mouths." If you so think on them at home, and meditate, any single one with

which the service begins may help you to collect your thoughts, and prepare you to pray when you hear them at Church.

The best and holiest men in all ages have been overwhelmed almost at the great privilege of being allowed to speak to GOD at all ; and so their words have been few. Remember Abraham's earnest and solemn prayer and intercession for the wicked cities of the plain ; how he felt, and how few his words were ! “ Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes. O let not my LORD be angry, and I will speak but this once.” Remember the awe which the Psalmist felt, when he thought what it was to sing praises in the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD : “ When I consider Thy Heavens, even the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained,—what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him ! ” Remember St. Thomas's exclamation, “ My LORD and my GOD ! ” Remember, above all, our LORD's own prayers ; how HE fell down on His knees in the garden, and repeated again and again the same words ; “ FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from ME ; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” Remember that prayer which HE has provided for us, lest we should be rash with our mouths ; how full, and yet how short it is ! After this pattern it is, that our Church prayers are formed ; broken up into Collects and short sentences, and as the Wise man says, into “ few words.”

Now, perhaps, you may think, that because these words are found us, and are put into our mouths by the Church, we are in less danger of being rash with our mouths, and of using vain repetitions. It is true, it is a great blessing to us to pray according to these set forms, by which the holy Church throughout all the world has prayed in the Spirit, and praised GOD acceptably, and confessed the faith of CHRIST crucified for so many hundred years ; that so with all the saints departed, and with the faithful yet on earth, in all parts of Christendom, we may glorify HIM ; may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify GOD, even the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. But if we worship HIM, we must worship HIM in spirit and in truth : if we pray and sing praises, we must pray and sing praises with the Spirit and understanding also.

Be not then deceived ; do not suppose you are doing His

service, when you are not: you *may* be "rash with your mouths" in using any of these solemn words, unless you endeavour to make them your own, and mean what you say.

To confess sins, which you do not feel and do not mean to forsake, in the daily service, and especially at God's altar, in the Communion Service, is to be rash, very rash with your mouths.

To call HIM "Our FATHER" in the LORD'S Prayer, without "arising in earnest to go to HIM as our FATHER," as the Prodigal did, and serve HIM truly henceforth, is to be rash with our mouths before HIM.

To say the Creed over and over again, without laying it to heart, and, *e. g.* secretly saying, as we go, "LORD, I believe, help THOU mine unbelief;" is to use rash words, and to make vain repetitions.

To sing Psalms without meaning, *e. g.* as in some places many join in Hymns about coming to the Holy Communion, without once so much as intending to come, all these several instances may serve to remind you, that you may make those words which the Church would give us for our wealth, an occasion of falling: we may have our prayers, our best acts, turned into sin.

Yes, my brethren, we may, and, alas! many do, make Divine Service itself a mere dream and a vanity; and speak before our GOD and SAVIOUR, and of HIM, and to HIM, to no better purpose, than if we were talking in our sleep. Now, then, ponder these things deeply.

Do not consider that to do this, is to do no evil: you must be rather the better or the worse for every word you utter here. May GOD give you grace to come, but, as I said, to come in earnest; to come with prepared hearts, prepared to hear, and, above all, prepared to pray; that so every confession may make you more humble, more earnest to forsake sin; every time you repeat the Creed more stedfast in faith; every Collect and Prayer more "joyful through hope;" every Psalm and Thanksgiving more rooted in charity; and so less unfit to join that blessed company, those thousand thousand who minister unto HIM, and ten thousand times ten thousand who stand before HIM.

SERMON CCXXVII.

EXAMPLES OF THANKFULNESS IN DISTRESS.

EPHESIANS v. 20.

“ Giving thanks always for all things unto GOD and the FATHER, in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

ST. PAUL repeats an injunction very like this to the Colossians also; for in like manner speaking, as in this place, concerning spiritual songs, he adds, “ Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the Name of the LORD JESUS; giving thanks to GOD and THE FATHER by HIM.”

That many things are occasions of thankfulness to GOD, all will naturally allow; but that in JESUS CHRIST we are to give thanks for all things, and at all times, sounds almost strange in our ears; and we too little consider how very certain, and how very important, this duty is.

But however strange any command in Holy Scripture may appear to those who do not consider, it will be found to agree perfectly with what is taught, in other ways, in other parts of Scripture.

And in this case, if we will only remember what it is that all true religion consists in, as set before us in the Bible, we shall perceive how very necessary a part of it is this thankfulness, as here described; not as an occasional feeling, or to be called forth by particular circumstances only, but for all things and at all times.

For the Christian religion may be considered to consist

entirely in the love of GOD, or in faith in GOD, through JESUS CHRIST: so much so, that if a man has these, in the scriptural sense of the words, he has every thing required; if he has not these, he has nothing, has neither part nor lot in the matter.

Every Christian is required to love GOD with all his heart and soul and strength, and he who does this, or sincerely endeavours to do so, will be thankful not merely for one thing only that GOD sends, and murmur at another; but will be thankful for all things that his Heavenly FATHER is pleased to give him. For this is the very nature of love: he who loves another will receive any thing from him, not weighing the value of the gift, but receiving it with welcome, because it comes from him he loves. And the love of GOD implies the fullest confidence and rest in His infinite goodness, and a full assurance that HE ever gives that which is best for us. And even labour, and pain, and hardship,—even these, we know, become pleasant and delightful, when they are borne for one that we love,—when they are received as coming from ONE of Whom we have the highest confidence that HE will not willingly afflict us. Men, indeed, feel rather a satisfaction in suffering for one whom they love, more so than in receiving benefits from him.

If, therefore, we in any way fulfil that which is our bounden duty, and love GOD with all our heart, and soul, and strength, how shall we not give HIM thanks for all things, and at all times?

Or, again:—if we consider all religion to consist in faith, we must still come to the same conclusion. We know how often our Blessed LORD speaks of faith and believing in HIM, as indispensably necessary for every one who would receive any benefit from HIM; and as that qualification in man which is ever quite certain to obtain from HIM any thing that we can desire. How often does HE assure us, in various ways, that whatsoever we ask in faith, we shall receive? Such are those expressions in the Gospels, “If thou canst believe;” “All things are possible to him that believeth.” And if there is any misgiving, any difficulty, any impossibility of being cured and benefited by HIM, it is on account of our want of faith. Thus, to the disciples, when they could not cast out the evil spirit, HE declared the reason was, because of their unbelief, for if they had

faith, they might move mountains from their place. And when they called out to HIM, in fear and distress at the storm, HE rebuked them, saying, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?"

To have faith, therefore, in GOD, through JESUS CHRIST, was the cure for every disorder, the alleviation of every distress; to have faith in GOD only, as infinitely just, and Who, the Scriptures declare to us, is "a consuming fire," might be more difficult, as our weak nature might be overwhelmed with fear before HIM: but as HE is manifested to us in JESUS CHRIST, as GOD THE FATHER, the FATHER of our LORD, and in HIM the FATHER of us all, how shall we not have full faith and confidence in HIM? And this our LORD seems to imply, in those words of encouragement to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in GOD, believe also in ME:" as if to believe in HIM was a full remedy for all trouble of heart.

So far, therefore, as we have this faith,—which is so essentially required of all Christians, without which, indeed, they can have no life,—it is very evident that we shall give thanks for all things, at all times. This faith takes the sting out of every evil, and sweetens the bitter waters of calamity by the wood of the Cross.

No Christian can have life without this love of GOD, and this faith in HIM; and no one can have this love and faith without being always thankful; and, therefore, every Christian must be always thankful.

Whatever Holy Scripture thus fully commands us, it also sets before us by examples in frail men like ourselves, and we shall therein find examples of this thankfulness under the heaviest troubles. And this not only in the New, but also in the Old Testament: and yet this was a far heavier trial to those who lived before the Gospel, inasmuch as though they knew that God was merciful, yet they could in no way see how good was to arise out of evil, and how trouble was a blessing.

But notwithstanding this, we not only find that all the Saints of GOD, such as Abraham, and Joseph, and Moses, in old time showed, through the whole of their lives, that they were ever giving thanks for all things, although often severely tried; but Scripture has on many occasions recorded express words of

thanksgiving from persons who were suffering under the heaviest calamities.

Such, for instance, are those memorable words of the holy Job, when from the highest estate of earthly happiness he had been quickly bereft, and left bare of all things, and yet his only words, when all this came upon him, were words of thanksgiving: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD."

From a state still lower, and apparently more hopeless even than this, do we hear the voice of the prophet Jonah, out of the belly of the whale, thanking God, and saying: "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer came in unto THEE, into Thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy; but I will sacrifice unto THEE with the voice of thanksgiving."

But we have another instance still more wonderful and astonishing even than this. One of the highest songs of thanksgiving which is now in the world, that which we sometimes use in the Morning Service of our Church, called the Song of the Three Children, is said to have been sung by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, out of the midst of the fiery furnace: so that to "glorify God in the fires," as Holy Scripture says, has become a sort of proverb for those who thank God in the midst of deep affliction. "They walked,"—it is said in the Apocryphal Scriptures,—"they walked in the midst of the fire, praising God, and blessing the LORD. Then Azarias stood up, and prayed on this manner, and opening his mouth in the midst of the fire, said, Blessed art THOU, O LORD God of our fathers, Thy Name is worthy to be praised and glorified for evermore."

Now of course it may be said, that these persons,—in the midst of so great a miracle, and with the SON of God walking visibly present with them,—were supported above nature; for it is said, that in the midst of the furnace there was around them "a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt, nor troubled them." And therefore it may be said, that their praising God, under such circumstances, was more to be expected than under the common troubles of life. But this is not a true view of the case; for it is evident that Holy Scripture

means this as an example to all persons, to show them that in "the fiery furnace of adversity," i. e. in trouble of every kind, JESUS CHRIST is walking with them, so that the fire shall not hurt them, much less destroy them, if they trust in HIM. For how is it that these three captives were thus unhurt in the flames? It was, doubtless, only on account of that faith through which they gave up their lives, trusting in GOD, rather than deny HIM and disobey HIM. And thus it is said to all Christians, "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

It was the same faith in GOD, which showed itself in others under all the evils of life, and found in them occasions of thanksgiving, such as we find in the words of the Prophet Habakkuk: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the LORD; I will joy in the GOD of my salvation."

And indeed GOD has HIMSELF supplied us with a form and words of thanksgiving, under almost every evil of human life, in the Book of Psalms; and we cannot but suppose that the Apostle himself was alluding to this in the passage where the text occurs, for he there speaks of Christians as "speaking" to themselves "in psalms," and "making melody in their hearts to the LORD." In this Divine Book, we find that the holy Psalmist, "the man after God's own heart," turned every thing that occurred to him into a subject of praise and thankfulness. Often, indeed, does the holy writer appear to be greatly oppressed and troubled for a time by sufferings from without, or distress of mind, and often from a sense of sin; but all these only lead him on to glorify GOD, and give HIM thanks: so that, instead of being subjects of complaint and murmuring, they immediately become to him the sources of praise. And often it may be noticed that the same Psalm, which at first commences with words of earnest prayer, as from one suffering great distress, before the termination of it is turned into a song of thanksgiving. And at other times, when the distress of his mind does not appear to be removed, still does he continue to be thankful, though not comforted; supplying words by which many a sor-

rowful soul, unto the end of the world, may learn patience and trust in GOD, even under the worst of human sufferings, a wounded spirit and depression of mind. Three times, for instance, does he repeat these affecting words, "Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul; and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in GOD, for I will yet give HIM thanks for the help of His countenance."

And thus, even when he laments his sorrows most strongly, does he blend with them words of thankfulness. When he says, "My life is waxen old with heaviness, and my years with mourning: my strength faileth me because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed." Yet soon after in the same Psalm does he add, "O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which THOU hast laid up for them that fear THEE, and that THOU hast prepared for them that put their trust in THEE. Thanks be to the LORD, for HE hath showed me marvellous great kindness in a strong city."

We all know that the Psalms of David abound throughout in expressions of this kind, which may show us, first of all, that there is no sort of trouble or affliction with which we can be visited, but we shall find in the Psalms words of the HOLY GHOST by which we may express our thankfulness for it, according to this command of the Apostle. Affliction of body or affliction of mind, powerful and wicked enemies oppressing us, or our familiar friends deceiving, or worldly disasters, or the bitterness of repentance, may here learn words to praise GOD: and even in despair of life itself, here may be found words of thankfulness: "HE is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall. Wherefore my heart was glad and my glory rejoiced." "For THOU wilt not leave my soul in hell," says the Psalmist: "THOU shalt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy."

In the next place he shows us how we are to become thankful in trouble, even when least inclined to be so, and that is by Prayer; inasmuch as many of the Psalms are prayers, yet ever leading unto thanksgiving. And therefore if, on any subject, we are inclined to murmur rather than to give thanks, then, for this cause, we are to pray until our mourning be turned into thanksgiving.

But if we pass from the Old Testament to the New, there shall we find not only this thankfulness under all troubles, but the reasons for it given more clearly and fully than ever they were before; for it was never known, until declared by JESUS CHRIST, how it was that trouble and sorrow are proofs of GOD'S love, and that great should be their reward in Heaven, who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake," and so far are made like unto JESUS CHRIST.

It was in prison and at midnight that Paul and Silas were heard by the prisoners singing praises unto GOD. And through all his letters, how does this great Apostle set before us as an example of what he teaches; the greater his afflictions are, the more does his heart seem to overrun with thankfulness to GOD; and this is not only the case in sufferings from without, in which he seemed, as it were, all over the world to be bearing about the Cross of his LORD; but in that unknown trial and affliction, that "thorn in the flesh," which so much troubled him, that he prayed oft-times to the LORD that it might depart from him,—even in this he learned afterwards a source of thanksgiving: and when it was told him of GOD, that His strength would be best perfected in such weakness, he was thankful, and said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of CHRIST may rest upon me." When he found that this affliction was working in him the power of CHRIST, he was grateful to have received even that also, and gave GOD the glory in the true spirit of thankfulness.

But if we pass from the inspired Apostles and Saints of Holy Scripture to men more like ourselves, we shall find instances of this thankful spirit in good men even in our own Church. Thus in the prayer of a good Bishop of our own (Bishop Wilson), we find he says, "They that have a convenient place to sleep in, and they that have the comfort to sleep, have both great reason to be thankful; and even they that want these mercies, ought to bless GOD, if in the midst of their afflictions HE is pleased to refresh them with the comforts of grace."

Another holy person of our Church (Mr. George Herbert), at the time of his last sickness and death, felt thankful for every day that passed, because it brought him nearer to his end, when he hoped to be with GOD.

Since, therefore, Christianity is so full of this command, and there is no time, or place, or circumstance, but when we may practise it ; and since there is so great a cloud of witnesses who have acted up to this law, let us also “ go, and do likewise ;”—giving thanks to GOD for the daily comforts and blessings which HE showers down upon us ; but, above all, giving HIM thanks for His fatherly chastisements ;—showing such a due sense of all His mercies, that “ our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth ” His “ praise, not only with our lips, but also in our lives.”

It may seem, on hearing of this duty, that there is none more delightful and pleasant, but be assured there is none more important, and none more difficult to practise.

It is, indeed, walking in Heavenly places while we are upon earth ; and this we cannot do while cumbered with earthly cares. No one can be truly thankful, but he who is humble ; and we cannot be humble unless we mourn constantly for our sins.

“ Blessed are they that mourn,” says a voice from Heaven, “ for they shall be comforted.” They only who are thus comforted of GOD can be truly thankful. They who mourn are blessed, and they who are blessed are thankful.

SERMON CCXXVIII.

THE DUTY OF THANKFULNESS IN ALL THINGS.

EPHESIANS v. 20.

“ Giving thanks always for all things unto GOD and the FATHER, in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

IN considering these words of St. Paul this morning, I endeavoured to show how great and important is this duty of thankfulness; and that even under the greatest evils and calamities of life: and I mentioned that, as all true religion consists in faith and love, and that as there could not exist any faith in GOD, or love of HIM, without thankfulness, so there could be no true religion without thankfulness. I showed you how all the Saints of GOD were remarkable for thankfulness under the greatest troubles: this I pointed out in the case of Job in his afflictions, of Jonah in the whale's belly, of Daniel in the lions' den, of the Three Children in the fiery furnace, of David throughout the Psalms,—almost all of which, when they begin in distress end with thanksgiving,—of the Apostle St. Paul, and of good men in our own Church: thus I endeavoured to show you with what moving expressions and examples this duty was set before us by the HOLY SPIRIT. And now let us, by GOD's grace, endeavour to apply all that has been said to our conduct and practice.

All Christians, therefore, will be ready to allow that we are bound to be thankful under the evils of life as well as for its apparent blessings; for, in fact, what we call evils, are but greater bless-

ings in disguise ; and all faith in God and love of HIM will consider them as such.

But although we are ready to allow this, and even to apply it to many cases, and to feel thankful to God for what HE takes away as well as for what HE gives, especially when under some great calamity we call in religion to our support, yet it generally happens that each person has some one particular trial under which he is not disposed to be thankful, but secretly to complain. He is inclined to think that this trouble or trial is of all others that which is the most difficult for him to bear, that any other than this which oppresses him, he could bear with patience. Now this is because persons are always apt to think thus under the pressure of that which distresses them for the time being ; and besides, it is very likely the case, that the trial which they labour under is indeed of all others the severest to them. And that for this cause. Let us consider what is the most obvious reason why our Heavenly FATHER sends any trial or affliction upon us ; we know HE does not willingly afflict the children of men. The reason, doubtless, is often this,—to draw our hearts off from the world, and to fix them more upon HIMSELF. In what point, therefore, is HE most likely to disappoint, and therefore to distress, each one of us?—surely in that on which our worldly hearts are most set ; for there our particular danger most lies. And therefore, of course, each person is most likely to be tried and afflicted in that point in which he feels it most of all : if he has a wound or sore place in his soul, there is he the most likely to feel the trying, but healing, Hand of his Heavenly Physician and Friend.

For instance, the ALMIGHTY may perceive that the heart of one person is very much bent on a favourite child : HE may know that, in other respects, his temptation and danger is not so great ; but in this one respect, that his thoughts and affections are so bound down to the earth, that he is likely to forget his eternal interests and his FATHER in Heaven. The ALMIGHTY, therefore, with respect to other matters in which such a person is careless or indifferent, may leave him to enjoy them, and afford him wealth, and honour, and friends ; but in this one thing, —in this child,—HE may disappoint him, may take the child away, or in other ways bring distress upon him. And yet it is evident

that this is the disappointment, this is the distress, which he will most feel,—for here his love is most fixed,—so as to hold all other blessings of little value in comparison: and for that very reason it may be, that on this subject alone he is tried.

In another case, our Heavenly FATHER may see that the world and its concerns are much in a person's heart; that therefore he is too full of carefulness, too much pleased with worldly advantages, and too much cast down by its losses, so that the good seed of eternal life is likely to be choked, and to bring forth no fruit. If this, therefore, should be our temptation, if in this point lies our chief danger of failing of eternal life, then it may be necessary that in this point, more especially, we should be thwarted, and vexed, and disappointed continually,—that we should suffer much worldly loss and inconvenience: and yet, of course, for these very reasons, on no subject, perhaps, should we feel them so much as on this.

Another person may be particularly inclined to pride and vanity, his ruling passion may be a desire to exalt himself in the opinion of others, and for this reason he may be especially vexed and distressed by disgrace in the eyes of men; and with regard to all other matters he may care little about them comparatively. And yet, in the eyes of his Heavenly FATHER, it may be the very rock on which he is likely to split, that on which his eternal salvation is in great hazard: the mode, therefore, in which he is afflicted, may be that point in which he is most tender,—here the arrows of the ALMIGHTY may find him out, rather than in any other. And in all the troubles and trials that may come upon him, he may think that any other inflictions he would bear with patience and thankfulness besides these.

Many are the cases of this kind in which we may see, that the trial which is put upon us may indeed be the very hardest for us to bear with thankfulness; but instead of repining on this account, all true love and faith will be ready to acknowledge the Hand of GOD in it,—the kind and protecting Hand of our best Friend, and therefore will be thankful. If we cannot, at first, make such trials a subject of praise and thanksgiving to the Author of all good, yet we must make them a subject of prayer; and if we continue to do this,—praying that GOD's will may be done in us, and not our own,—it will at length become a subject

of praise also: as that infirmity which St. Paul had become to him, after he had thrice prayed; and as all the subjects of his prayer do become to the Psalmist themes of praise, "his sackcloth" of mourning is put off, and he is "girded with gladness."

And, indeed, in sending us these troubles we may see God's great mercy to us; for if we had nothing to lament, we should have nothing to desire; and if we had nothing to desire, we should have nothing to pray for; and if we do not learn how to pray, we should never be happy.

But besides these that are mentioned, there is another subject of sorrow which may appear at first sight an exception to that command of giving thanks always, and such is the heaviest of all afflictions; viz. when God makes us to feel our former iniquities, and we are oppressed and weighed down under the just sense of our sins, and dread of God's judgments. Surely it might be said we cannot give thanks for guilt, we cannot give praise under the sense of that which alone is truly evil, both now and hereafter.

But yet we find the spirit of the Psalmist, even in this case also, is ever turned to thanksgiving; when he most bitterly laments his sins and prays more earnestly for pardon, his heart is ever turned to an acknowledgment of God's mercy, and to pay HIM the sacrifice of praise.

In such grief and mourning the humble penitent will ever find more consolation than in any gratification which this world can afford him. To such a one, penetrated and pierced through and through by the arrows of the ALMIGHTY, and the upbraidings of a tender and awakened conscience, all the mercies of God, as manifested through the Gospels; in many affecting incidents and expressions, and as manifested in His daily Providence;—all these will afford him the most heartfelt and deep consolation, for which his soul will be full and running over, and his very tongue will abound with thanksgiving.

It may be said, he cannot indeed but be full of trembling, and full of fear, for how can he have any assurance that his sins are blotted out of God's book? But though he has, in more or less degree, forfeited all such confidence, yet if God still allows him to live on from day to day, is not this a mercy to be thankful for? While there is life, there is hope, and time for prayer; and while there is life, there are still marks of God's loving-kindness. Is

he not still in GOD'S Church, and a member of CHRIST'S Body? Surely if any one has cause to be thankful always, it is the penitent;—to be “thankful unto GOD and the FATHER, in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.” Blessed be GOD'S unbounded mercies in JESUS CHRIST, that even the worst of evils, even our sins, should turn to His praise by our sincere repentance; for to confess them is to give glory to GOD; and a contrite heart is the sacrifice which HE most delights in.

But now, if no troubles are so great but that, notwithstanding, even for them we should give thanks always; neither, on the other hand, are any mercies so small but for them also we should always, at all times, be thankful. We pray daily for our daily bread; and what we pray for, we are surely bound to give thanks for, when our prayers are answered. At their daily meals even Heathens used to give solemn thanks, and we may hope that no Christian omits such a practice as this. We find from the Gospels that there was something very remarkable in our Blessed SAVIOUR'S breaking of bread, as if it was accompanied by some significant action: and we find it mentioned several times, that on such an occasion “HE gave thanks;” and it is also said, at the same time, that “HE lifted up His eyes to Heaven.” If even HE, Who made and sustained all the worlds by the breath of His mouth, did, as Man, give solemn thanks to GOD for His daily bread, with what thoughts of reverence and thanksgiving ought we always to raise our thoughts to Heaven, when we receive these His daily gifts? Blessed are they who never neglect to do so,—not for form's sake, not as an idle profession, not as they who are half-ashamed to acknowledge GOD,—but as unworthy children, who see their FATHER'S Hand, and are filled with love and awe at beholding it.

And if for our daily bread, surely for our nightly sleep also every Christian is bound to return solemn words of gratitude; it is to be hoped that every Christian has some Psalm by heart,—such as the hundred and thirty-ninth, or sixty-third, and many others; or some hymn, such as the Morning Hymn,—which he repeats on first waking every morning. Such a practice will have an effect on his mind all day: one who observes such a practice, be assured, is more likely to awake from the grave with a song of thanksgiving in the other world, than he who does not do so.

If there is any one here who does not observe such a practice, let me earnestly urge him to do so. Oh! let us think what it will be to awake on the last great morning of eternity! Shall we then awake to give thanks for ever? or to curse the day when we were born? One of these two will be the lot of each among us. But how shall we then give thanks and sing praises to God, unless we are used to do so here? how shall we then love that employment which we do not love below? How shall we then love God, if we have never exercised this before? No; we shall never be admitted into Heaven, unless we have learnt the love of God below. And love, St. Paul tells us, "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" and therefore, we may say, is always thankful for "all things." It is not on great occasions only, but at all times, whether alone or in company, whether in joy or sadness, whether in speaking of public matters or of private, whether raised up or cast down, in evil report or good report, rising up or lying down, in life and in death, in the common duties of daily life, and in the Sacraments and ordinances of religion, the Love of God will always see some reasons for thankfulness: knowing that all things work together for good for those that love God. Nothing will come amiss or unwelcome to this heavenly Love.

As far as this world is in our hearts, we may well go murmuring and disquieted all our days, and see in all things, great and small, and in all persons, matter of complaint; and if we live in this temper, doubtless we shall die in it; and if we die in it, we shall be no fit company for happy Angels, but rather for unhappy and lost spirits; and with them we shall doubtless have our portion, for of him who loves the world, we know that the love of the FATHER is not in him. But if we do indeed sincerely and constantly endeavour to love God, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and all our strength;—if with faithful Mary, the friend of CHRIST, we have chosen the one thing that alone is needful, and that portion which shall never be taken away;—if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, longing for improvement in holiness more than for our daily food and all the comforts of this life;—then, doubtless, we shall be clothed, as it were, with thanksgiving, we shall in all things find something for which to be thankful.

Our life is made up of small things, things of apparently little importance, day after day and hour after hour, and "he that despiseth small things," we read, "shall fall by little and little;"—it is in such apparently trifling matters that we are to exercise our thankfulness, by discerning in them God's presence. It is only by doing this that we shall obtain a spirit of lowly gratitude in great matters.

It may be said that a thankful spirit is a happy spirit; but it is not on this account that Scripture commands it, for it does not command us to be happy, nor to seek happiness here below; but this temper is required of us, both because this thankfulness is in itself a great duty to our Heavenly FATHER, and because we shall never be able to fulfil our great and important duties to GOD and our neighbour without it. There is no duty to GOD which we can perform acceptably without a thankful temper:—our prayers, our almsdeeds, our fastings, must all be done with not only a reverent and humble, but also a thankful temper; as in alms so in all things else, "GOD loveth a cheerful giver." And it is very evident that we can never love our neighbour, and fulfil all those services which Love requires, without it; whatever we do for GOD or man is rendered more acceptable by a grateful and cheerful mind.

Perhaps all persons from the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of CHRIST derive something of a thankful mind; any thing like unthankfulness or a discontented complaining spirit appears ungracious to them, and does not harmonize with their better feeling, at such a time:—this may serve to show them of what spirit they ought to be at all times.

And some on the LORD'S Day also feel that all worldly disquietude, all murmuring and impatience, ought to be set aside; for they feel some little within them of Heavenly joy, and some quiet anticipation of that Sabbath which will never end; and every thing that does not agree with this quiet peace of mind is jarring and uncomfortable to them on that day. Happy are they who thus keep the LORD'S Day; but this is not enough. The whole life of a Christian should be so far a Sabbath, and that temper which is suitable to the Sunday is the only one suitable to a Christian on every other day: feelings of mind we cannot keep up, and our duty does not consist in them; but in high and low

feelings, in distress and joy, we may still give thanks in all things, and at all times : so in all our conduct may we show that, unworthy as we are, we are not quite insensible to God's unceasing mercies and forbearance.

And now to God the Author of all blessings, to God the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, let us ascribe, as is most justly due, all might, power, and majesty,—all love, honour, and thanksgiving,—both now and for evermore.

SERMON CCXXIX.

PREPARATION TO MEET GOD.

AMOS iv. 12.

“Prepare to meet thy GOD.”

THE Holy Scriptures are so wonderfully contrived, that although every part of them is so deep that the wisest of men can never reach the bottom of it; yet at the same time there is no part in which the most unlearned cannot understand something; indeed, in which he may not by attention gain very much for his good and for his soul's health. And one thing that tends much to produce this effect among many others is this, that they are full of numberless little sayings and proverbs; so that if a person does not understand the meaning of a chapter, and perhaps knows little of all the history that it alludes to, yet there will occur every now and then some expression like that of the text, which a good man, although ever so ignorant, cannot fail to understand, and recognize as a voice of GOD to himself. And again, such little passages are wonderfully suited to assist the memory; so that, although we could not remember a whole chapter, even if we understood it; yet a word of warning like that we are now considering, (and with such Holy Scripture abounds,) may be at all times called to mind. And a good man, who is earnestly bent to know and to do GOD's will, although he is no scholar, yet in the understanding of such passages will arrive much more at the true meaning of the SPIRIT, than they who are most learned, and yet have not the fear of GOD.

Now this is very much the case with the Prophets, which are at this season read every day in the Church; they are in general like St. Paul's epistles, as St. Peter says of them, “hard to

be understood," and sometimes they may seem to speak of other things and matters than concern ourselves; but every now and then they speak in plain and distinct words, so that all can understand; and so loud and clear as to be enough to startle every one from one end of the world to the other, with the great and concerning truth which they bring to mind. They come out like the fiery characters seen by midnight on the wall; or, like the words which dropped from our SAVIOUR'S own sacred lips, which each man felt were spoken by ONE Who knew the very secrets of his own heart; as if by them the Sacred SPIRIT said to him, "Thou art the man!"

This is very much the case with this short sentence in the Prophet Amos, which is now being read in the daily Service. For is there any man in the whole world who can say that the words are not spoken to himself? "Prepare to meet thy God." This is as much spoken to every one of us as if we heard it by a voice from Heaven, speaking to us in the stillness of the most secret chamber. Indeed, the whole business which we have in the world is this; it is the one and only reason why we are born, and the one and only reason why we are born again in Holy Baptism; it is in order that we might "prepare to meet our God." It is the great reason why God has set up His holy Church in the world, and sends His ministers to us. It is indeed the meaning of the whole Bible, that we should "prepare to meet our God:" to warn us of this, and to afford us every assistance and encouragement in this preparation. Indeed, some of our LORD'S most solemn discourses and most striking parables are directed particularly to this one end,—to warn us of His certain and speedy approach, and the necessity of our readiness to meet HIM. It is the subject which we have to think of at all times and places, whatever we say or do: and God has so wonderfully contrived it in His Divine Word, that this warning may always sound in our ears. The whole chapter it may be difficult to remember, but these few words may be carried home and called again to mind in the stillness of midnight on our beds, in the midst of company, in our daily labours; when we eat or drink, when we lie down or rise up, this ought to be the first and the last thought in the minds of us all, to "prepare to meet our God." These words should ever be like a trumpet sounding in our ears, "prepare to meet thy God."

Indeed, the trumpet, the mention of which occurs so often in these Prophets, like a warning voice, is the very sign which our LORD has taken to express this His call to us; for as it is often said that HE shall descend "with the sound of a trumpet," and send forth His Angels "with a great sound of a trumpet;" so HE appointed that the children of Israel should be called together especially with the sound of a trumpet: this denoted their calling of assemblies; the movement of their armies; their new moons and new years; as a token and sign of the Day of Judgment, the calling of the last great assembly, the movement of all the armies of Heaven and earth in the great Day; the new year, the beginning of the new Heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Therefore the voice of His Prophets is likened to this awakening sound, as where it is said, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet;" and in this Prophet Amos, "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?" This is the great sound which GOD has chosen to denote His coming; and this is what His Holy Word and His ministers are calculated to be; for their great object is to call together all mankind, to "prepare them to meet their God."

It is this in which mankind differ from all other creatures of GOD which we know of. Angels have not this call made to them; for they see GOD as HE is, and tremble before HIM. And the brute creatures have not, that we know of, to appear before HIM; but every man that is born must come at last to appear in the presence of HIM, of Whom it is said in Holy Scripture, that HE is "a consuming fire." And "who may abide the day of His coming?" And "who shall stand when HE appeareth?"

We are all to prepare "to meet our GOD;" this is our LORD's warning, "Be ye ready," or, Be ye prepared; Be ye ready, that is to say, to appear before GOD, "for at such an hour as ye think not, the SON of Man cometh." And "let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their LORD." Nor is it merely stated that we are to prepare to meet our GOD; but the occasion for which we are to meet HIM is always set before us in Scripture. We must all appear before the Judgment seat of CHRIST, that we may "receive the things done in the body," whether they be good or whether they be evil. And again, "every one must give an account of himself to GOD."

What it will be "to meet our GOD," no heart of man can con-

ceive : for what thought of man can ever understand what God is? The sea, and mountains speak of HIM, and of His power and greatness; and the sky above us, and the sun, and stars, and storms, and thunder; all these speak of HIM when they appal the heart of man, and make him to be amazed and lost in admiration of them. And all the creatures of His hand speak of HIM. And the wonderful powers which HE has given to man speak of HIM, Who gave him the power to speak, and to see, and hear, to understand and to remember. Every corner of the world which HE fills with His awful presence;—and the heart of every man in which HE is wonderfully present, speak of HIM. But what must the ALMIGHTY GOD HIMSELF be? and what must it be to meet HIM, and to appear before HIM? How must HE understand all things Who has given the power of understanding to man? How must HE remember all things Who has given to man the power of memory? How must HE behold all things and hear all things Who has given to man eyes to see, and ears to hear? Of objects in nature, that to which HE is most likened in Holy Scripture, is fire: fire gives life, or destroys it. Again in HIM is light, and no darkness at all. And of all properties in the human heart, that to which HE is most likened is love, for it is said, “God is love.” But still from these things we cannot comprehend Him; all that we can know is, that HE is to be feared and loved above all things, beyond all fear and love that we can entertain; and that he who fears and loves HIM most is better than all other objects that we can see; and that he who thus loves and fears God, has that within him which will keep him from perishing when the Heavens and the earth vanish away. Man cannot know HIM, nor comprehend HIM, excepting so far as he is taught by the SPIRIT of GOD; so far as man does know HIM, he must love and fear HIM more and more; they who do not fear HIM above all things, know HIM not; and most miserable are they! And the reason why Holy Scripture approves most of those who are meek and merciful, and of those who mourn and are penitent, is because they are most of all aware of what God is. But who can sufficiently humble and abase themselves before HIM? Who can deplore himself and his own sinfulness enough in His sight? Who can come to know his own nothingness, and the tremendous Majesty of God, “the great and terrible God,” Who “chargeth His angels with folly,” and in Whose sight “the Heavens

are not clean?" Who will make all things that we behold to vanish away from before HIM into nothing, because they are marked with sin, and the breath of His displeasure has past upon them? Who shall be prepared to meet this pure and holy, this all-knowing and all-powerful GOD? And yet of all things future none is so certain as this, that we must meet our GOD, and appear one by one before HIM. In a very few years, even they who live the longest must meet HIM, whether they are prepared for it or not; must meet HIM in reality, at whose very Name the best of men are bowed down with awe and reverence. But though the ALMIGHTY GOD is so infinitely beyond us, that with our highest thought we cannot conceive what HE is, for the knowledge of HIM is higher than Heaven above, and deeper than hell below; yet we may come to know HIM even in this world far more than we think we can, as HE is revealed to us in JESUS CHRIST. Even the disciples themselves could not believe how much in JESUS CHRIST they might behold the FATHER, the unseen GOD, Whom no man can see and live. "If ye had known ME," said our LORD to His disciples, "ye should have known My FATHER also; and from henceforth ye know HIM, and have seen HIM. Philip saith unto Him, LORD, show us the FATHER, and it sufficeth us. JESUS saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known ME, Philip? He that hath seen ME, hath seen the FATHER, and how sayest thou then, Show us the FATHER? Believest thou not that I am in the FATHER, and the FATHER in ME?" Even the disciples themselves knew not how much they beheld in the lowly ways of JESUS CHRIST, and His unwearied love and goodness;—that this was in fact the highest and best manifestation we could have made to us of the Great invisible GOD. As it had been shown to the Prophet Elijah, GOD was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the "still small voice," the humble teaching of JESUS CHRIST, as man conversing with man. For heathens of old were made to acknowledge the power of GOD in the storm, and earthquake, and lightning; but the SPIRIT of GOD only can lead us to see HIM, and to hear His voice in JESUS CHRIST: and even good Christians are not sufficiently aware how much GOD HIMSELF is to be seen in works of mercy and meekness; so that at the last, our LORD HIMSELF tells us, those His sheep, who will be set on the right hand, will be surprised to find how much such actions of lowliness and charity are remembered by

HIM, as done unto HIMSELF. Now, as the ONE, and only thing needful, is to prepare to meet our GOD; what an infinite blessing and privilege is it to us, that JESUS CHRIST has not only washed us in His Blood, and given us HIMSELF to be the food of our souls; but has set before us a most perfect pattern of what GOD is, before Whom we have to appear; in order that we may know Whom we have to copy and resemble, so that at the last we may be approved of by HIM! And this St. John often sets before us, as in these words, "We know, that when HE shall appear, we shall be like HIM, for we shall see HIM as HE is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as HE is pure."

The thought of meeting GOD is of itself so awful, that we might have been disposed to sit down in despair at the contemplation of it, were it not for this access to the FATHER which we have in JESUS CHRIST, Who is HIMSELF the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and no man cometh unto the FATHER but by HIM. HE is now set before us as our perfect example: as our High Priest, to intercede with GOD for us; as our King: but when HE shall appear as our Judge, then we must remember that HE will be seen not as Man only, concealing, as it were, from our sight His Divine Power and unspeakable Godhead; but HE will appear as GOD also, in His own Glory, and in the Glory of the FATHER, and with all the Holy Angels with HIM. It is this which renders the great Day of Judgment so inconceivably fearful, that the Heavens and the earth will pass away at the sight of it, because GOD will then HIMSELF be manifest: and all His creatures must meet HIM and stand before HIM. Then man must meet his GOD, for "we shall see HIM," it is said, "as HE is;" and behold, (oh, the awful and amazing words!) we shall behold and "see HIM face to face!" Then the servant shall meet his MASTER, to deliver in the account of his service, and the use of the talents committed to him; then the subject shall meet his KING, to be set by HIM on the right hand of His throne or on the left: then shall the criminal be brought before his JUDGE, to be acquitted or condemned by HIM: then shall we stand before the great Witness, the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, Who knows all our evil thoughts, and words, and deeds, better than we know them ourselves; for the great Searcher of hearts will then be manifested in His wonderful knowledge. Then shall we behold HIM Who is called the Alpha and Omega, that is to say, the First and

the Last, the Beginning and End; and our beginning and end will for ever be in HIM.

What all this is, I say, we know not, but we know that it is "an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD:" and our LORD has told us not to fear death, or any evil upon earth, on account of the greatness of that fear, which we ought to have of HIM Who hath power after HE hath killed to cast body and soul into hell.

We know also, that as ever since the fall of Adam every generation of men has been warned by GOD of some great impending event which was coming on them, so are we now warned that we are to "prepare to meet our GOD." But never was any warning of any coming event so often and so distinctly repeated to any generation as this warning is to us of these latter days—that we "prepare to meet our GOD." As sure as Holy Scripture is true it will have come and gone by in an instant, before we are aware of it, and our eternal portion will be assigned; for our LORD says, It will come "as a snare on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth:" it will have come and gone by in an instant, like some circumstance here below, which we look forward to and expect, and have very soon to look back upon.

"Who can think of these things worthily?" All we know is that it is of infinite consequence that we should be prepared, "lest that day should overtake us unawares." And we also know in what way we are to be prepared, what the things are which will be required of us. We cannot undo the past, which must all come before the all-seeing eye of our JUDGE; but during the little time that remains to us we can earnestly ask forgiveness with fastings, and prayers, and tears, for the sake of CHRIST; and thus we may, with GOD's mercy, gain some hope and comfort before we die.

"Prepare to meet thy GOD." To how many thousands have these words been addressed since they were first written; not to us only of this generation, but to those that are past? And they alone can fully know how gracious this warning was, and how important its full meaning, which we cannot understand before we die. To many persons of whom we read in holy Scripture these words were once spoken, as they now are to ourselves. This very warning was given to that covetous man, of

whom our SAVIOUR spoke, who was building new barns, wherein to stow his increasing goods, when it was said to him, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." This warning was spoken, as it now is to us, to that rich man who was faring sumptuously every day, when Lazarus lay at his gate full of sores, and in vain desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his table. And when he cried to Abraham, and entreated that some one should be sent from the dead to his five brethren, he was told that they had Moses and the Prophets,—wherein this warning had been so often written,—that if they would not hear them, "neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

To many who have lived nearer our own day, of whom we read in history, or whom we have known and seen, was this warning addressed, as it now is to us, and many times repeated in their ears: and their condition now depends on the attention they then paid to this warning.

If the rich man, so selfish as he was, yet even in the place of evil spirits felt so intense an interest for his brethren in the flesh, to know whether or not they were giving timely heed to this admonition, how much more, may we suppose, must those who are now with God, and received into His favour, be earnestly desirous that we who remain should not forget these words, while they are now addressed to us, and can so much profit us?

We may well suppose that with eager desire they now watch us; indeed, not only the spirits of the dead, but all the Angels of Heaven are looking down, doubtless, with awe and wonder at our doings, for "there is joy among them over one sinner that repenteth." They know what GOD is—they see how far we are from HIM, how far we wander away from HIM in darkness and blindness; how little we know, and how very little we consider the importance of these things; how GOD is even now about our path, and about our bed, and spying out all our ways, while we think not of it; and they know that of a sudden HE will be revealed and made manifest to us. Let us endeavour to feel for ourselves, as they feel for us; let us endeavour to feel for ourselves as GOD feels for us; let us take up His words, and act up to them, being assured that a day will come when we shall know their true meaning and full importance.

SERMON CCXXX.

THE WORD ABLE TO SAVE.

JAMES i. 21.

“Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.”

THE Word of GOD engrafted, like a living bud, into the heart, and therein received with meekness,—This it is which is able to save the soul;—This it is which, like the seed received into the honest and good heart, brings forth fruit unto everlasting life, thirty, or sixty, or an hundredfold. But it must be received and taken into the heart; and received with meekness, with an humble and obedient spirit; so as to become engrafted, bringing in an entirely new nature of its own; so that, like a branch grafted into the wild tree, its leaves and fruit should be entirely its own, partaking no more of the old stock, but quite of another nature.

Now the Word which is to be thus engrafted and received with meekness, may be understood in many senses, all equally true,—all, we may suppose, intended in Holy Scripture,—and all so wrapped up together as in a manner to contain each other. Now, first of all, the Word may signify the Sacred Name of the Ever-blessed Trinity, into Which we are baptized, and are made thereby new creatures; for thus Baptism is called the washing of regeneration by the Word, *i. e.* the outward washing of water together with the Holy Name of the Three Persons in One GOD. And in this sense the engrafted Word would be a living faith in GOD the FATHER, and GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST. It would come to signify the same as the Creed,—faith working by love in all holy obedience. And surely it would be very right

and proper for us to understand the text in this sense,—of the all-powerful Word,—the Word of GOD, by which the heavens were made,—the Name of GOD, grafted in the soul at Baptism, which is a new birth within us, and shows forth itself in a new life.

Or, again, the Word might be understood to mean the written Word of GOD, which is able to make wise unto salvation, if received with meekness, when it becomes written on the heart by the Finger of GOD, Which is His HOLY SPIRIT. And this sense is not contrary to the former, but the same in another form : for to believe in the Three Persons in One GOD, or in the Apostles' Creed, is, in fact, the same as to believe the Bible ; nor is there any saving faith in the Bible excepting this : for all Scripture is to set forth to us, how we are to have GOD for our Creator, and Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And thus the written Word of GOD becomes, as it were, a living power in the soul, “able to discern,” as Scripture says, “the thoughts and intents of the heart,” like the Eye of GOD Itself in the soul, watching over it, and keeping it, and bringing every thought into the obedience of CHRIST.

Or, again, the Word in this passage may be understood of HIM, of Whom it is said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was GOD.” The engrafted Word in this sense, then, would be CHRIST crucified, Who is often spoken of, as received into the heart, and manifested therein by His Grace. As St. Paul says, “I live no more, but CHRIST liveth in me.” The question, then, according to this sense would be, whether we receive into our hearts with meekness the doctrine of CHRIST crucified, being made conformable unto His death ; being in all things obedient unto HIM, Who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.

And, again, if we take it in this meaning, then especially does this apply to the Sacrament of CHRIST'S Body and Blood, of which HE says, “Who so eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in ME, and I in him.” This is indeed receiving, in the very highest sense, that engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls : whereby “our bodies are made clean by His Body, and our souls washed by His most precious Blood.”

But now, in all these senses in which GOD speaks to us,—of the engrafted Word saving our souls,—there is nothing more

uncommon than for it to be received with meekness: indeed, the power of GOD'S Word is as "a two-edged sword," we are told,— "the sword of the SPIRIT;" and it is so spoken of on account of the power it ought to have in our own souls, in that war which there is in our own hearts from evil passions; but instead of this it becomes, among evil and corrupt men, a sword which is turned against others, and not against themselves, and finds no effectual entrance into their own hearts at all.

Now to take the Word in the last sense spoken of,—with regard to that Holy Sacrament,—nothing has ever been received in the world with less meekness; instead of being so accepted, with all reverence, there has never been any worse subject of contention and strife among mankind than this Feast of Love; nothing has ever stirred up more the worst passions of corrupt man; even in speaking of it men have forgotten that "meekness of wisdom" which St. James enjoins, more than on any other subject; and thereby they have been by Satan tempted to set aside the only matter of any real consequence; viz. whether they so humble their souls under a sense of sin as to receive the engrafted Word with due meekness: as the Catechism says, "examining themselves whether they truly repent them of their former sins, have a lively faith in GOD'S mercy through CHRIST, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and are in perfect charity with all men."

But again, with regard to the Scriptures, the written Word of GOD:—What is more uncommon than this meekness, with which alone they can be savingly received? Of late years, every one has supposed that he knows the Scriptures: rich and poor, learned and ignorant,—all know what is called the whole scheme of redemption,—the whole economy of GOD. Very many, indeed, have supposed that others do not, and that themselves are in a state of light, while others are in darkness; but still all alike have supposed that they themselves quite understand the Scriptures; so much so, that the age altogether has considered itself an age of light. But, now, any considerate person must see, that if this is knowledge—yet a knowledge which boasts of itself, must assuredly be that knowledge which "puffeth up," as Scripture says: whereas we read that mysteries—the mysteries of GOD—are revealed unto the meek; the "treasures which are hid in CHRIST," "the unsearchable riches," "the wisdom which is

from above," "and cometh down from the Father of Lights,"—this is revealed unto babes. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable," "full of mercy and good fruits;" but this knowledge which abounds is neither pure nor peaceable, nor full of good fruits, and sets aside mercy. And, therefore, there probably never has been any time since the Scriptures have been written when they have been less understood, when people have been in a greater state of spiritual darkness with regard to the true end and meaning of all religion, than of late years. Now quite the contrary to this is generally supposed, for this reason,—that the art of printing has made Bibles so common, and put them into every body's hands, and learning to read and schools have supplied people, it is thought, with the very key of knowledge,—how then can it be said that such is an age of darkness?

Now in answer to this, let us consider the times when our Blessed SAVIOUR HIMSELF was upon earth, and observe how HE judged of such things. HE said of the Scribes and Pharisees, that they had taken away the key of knowledge, that they entered not in themselves, and others who would have entered in they hindered. This key of knowledge has been explained to mean humility. The Scribes and Pharisees were extremely proud of their knowledge of the Scriptures; and indeed their knowledge of them was very great, as far as it could be called knowledge: they knew the letter of them, they could interpret them very correctly, and with much intellectual cleverness and skill. We find them constantly alluding to the Scriptures, and always right in their allusion; *e. g.* they said that CHRIST could never come from Nazareth, HE must be born at Bethlehem, the city of David; they said also, that when CHRIST came no one would know from whence HE was; they said that Elias must first come before CHRIST: now all this was quite true. But this knowledge, so far from bringing them to CHRIST, was the very thing that kept them from HIM; they were so proud of this knowledge, that they looked upon others as being in a state of complete darkness, and therefore under the curse of GOD. They said, "Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed on HIM? But this people which know not the law are cursed." Here also they spoke of a great truth which they knew; it was very true that the people who knew not the law were under the curse; for the law was the school-

master to bring them to CHRIST, and if they believed not Moses' writings, neither would they believe CHRIST's words; but this point which they knew not was that this people, ignorant of the law, and therefore under the curse, as they said, were not those poor ignorant people that were following CHRIST, but themselves. Here pride had blinded their eyes. They were like those wicked people at Sodom, who could not find the door, although they were close to it, because on account of their wickedness they were smitten of GOD with blindness. And we may observe, that there are no people who are so much spoken of in Scripture as blind and ignorant, as these wise and knowing Scribes and Pharisees: it is of them especially that it is so often repeated, that GOD had blinded their eyes that they could not see, and made their ears gross that they could not hear, and their hearts dull that they could not understand. And all this was because they wanted the spirit of a little child, without which no one could enter into the kingdom,—they wanted meekness.

In like manner, it is a thing especially to be noticed, that in the prophecy of Daniel respecting these latter days, he says, "that many shall run to and fro, and that knowledge shall be increased;" a knowledge, *i. e.* like that of the Pharisees. As running to and fro was never so fulfilled in any age of the world as it now is, beyond all former conception; so also is it true, that knowledge increases, the knowledge that puffs up; but with regard to that true wisdom which makes a man small in his own eyes and lowly in his walk, so that he is able to get in at the narrow door of life, and to walk in a straitened path so safely as not to fall from it at last:—of this wisdom the same great Prophet says, "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." And yet no doubt these wicked men that shall not understand, shall be like the Scribes and Pharisees, puffed up with the conceit of their own superior knowledge; for as our SAVIOUR says, if they were blind, they would not have sin, but they say, We see; therefore their sin remaineth. "Knowledge shall be increased," says the Prophet, and another, that the knowledge of the LORD shall fill the earth "as the waters cover the sea;" but yet "none of the wicked shall understand."

Now what is the case before us in the present day? There have been in times of old, saints of GOD endued with wonderful

powers of understanding, which might have made them very great in this world if they had wished it, but who gave themselves up to love God with all their mind, and all their understanding, as well as all their soul and strength, humbling themselves before HIM, and seeking out the meaning of His revealed Word by unceasing prayer. And the consequence has been, that they became, by the SPIRIT of GOD, gifted in a very extraordinary manner with Divine knowledge; for they sought wisdom from HIM alone, Who has promised to give it; and they have left the proofs of this by vast and voluminous works, which will last, we may well suppose, until the end of the world; so that even now it is fulfilled of them even here upon earth what the Prophet Daniel says, they have become "wise" and "turn many to righteousness," and "shine as the brightness of the firmament" in the darkness of this world, and "as the stars for ever and ever."

But what I am here about to observe of them is this, that although these saints became by prayer and meditation so full of wisdom and the knowledge of God's Word, yet the more they knew the more they came to feel their own ignorance; they never thought they could sufficiently understand God's Word, or obey it with sufficient care; they were ever listening as it were to hear the smallest whisper of "that still and small voice" in which God is; they found every part of His written Word to contain wonderful treasures of wisdom and knowledge: so full were they of love and reverence for that bread of life which God has given us in the Scriptures, that they were careful to gather up the least crumbs that fell from His table; while others, even unto the end of the world, are astonished at their holiness and wisdom, they themselves were ever stretching forth their hands unto God, and bewailing their ignorances of HIM; they literally trembled at His Word; they humbled themselves before HIM in every thing that HE had revealed; and thus they came more and more to be like little children, full of meekness, like little children in the dark clinging to their FATHER's hand, and fearing for one moment to be parted from HIM; feeling themselves to be in darkness more and more, although they had become far wiser in the things of salvation than other children of men.

Now the very contrary to this we find all around us in the present day—persons of all ranks and conditions, men and women,

rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all full of confidence and presumption on account of their knowledge; their knowledge respecting the Word of God, His Church, and His ways of salvation: they know full well, they are able to decide all things: they know what God's Church ought to be, and how it ought to be governed; they know the Scriptures, and when they hear a chapter read out of the Gospel, they understand, they think, all it means.

And yet it is very certain, that these are not the kind of persons to whom God has promised to reveal His knowledge. If we look abroad to what is going on in the present day, we find persons setting forth plans for altering the Church of God from the way in which it has been from the times of the Apostles down to the present age: for altering the Liturgy with their own hands; and deciding with great confidence on points which the very holiest and wisest men feel to be far above them. And yet these are persons of whom many are notoriously such as the Apostle says "can have no inheritance in the kingdom of God," on account of their evil lives; worldly men, who have no fear of God before their eyes.

And thus they go on as if able to judge on the very holiest of matters, although their own lives are full of impurity, of pride, and covetousness: even foremost among them are such as have never considered that one text, that whoremongers and adulterers, the covetous and extortioners, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. But as to receiving the Word of God as the guide of their life,—as the law coming from God HIMSELF, by which they will be judged on the last Day, and on which their eternal salvation depends, this is indeed very far from them. It seems not to enter into their thoughts. And yet it is most certain, that all true knowledge of God and of His Word must depend on the knowledge of our own hearts, on knowing ourselves, our own miserable lost condition, our own sins and blindness, and consequently of our own danger. This alone will lead us to receive the Scriptures as the guide of our life. For this end alone are they given; and they are a book that is sealed to all those who do not thus receive them, whatever they may think. Their only end is this. Thus we pray in the words of the Litany for grace "to hear meckly God's Word, and to receive it with pure affec-

tion, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit :” and Holy Scripture describes those who alone are accepted of God, as “ They who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

This is the only temper in which a sinful creature can receive a message which comes from God, or, as we might say, a reprieve which is sent from God to a guilty criminal, under sentence of death,—a respite of his sentence, and a pardon on certain conditions being fulfilled ; for this is what the Scriptures of God are to us. The only manner in which sinful man can rightly receive this, must be, as it were, upon his knees, praying that he may understand it aright, and may not for ever perish for not understanding it, and therefore humbled to the dust under the fear of not rightly comprehending it. Or if not on his knees, *i. e.* in a spirit of humiliation and prayer ; yet surely as Scripture expresses it, with his loins girded, and his shoes on his feet, ready instantly to set out in obedience to what it requires of him, in passing over from the shadow of death and darkness unto the kingdom of God. If such a reprieve or such a message sent from God to His guilty creatures, lying under sentence of eternal death, were written in difficult characters, in writing “ hard to be understood,” then such a one would, if he had any serious regard to his salvation, take all the means in his power rightly to understand it ; he would ask of those who brought it, how they understood it, how all good and serious men had understood it from the beginning : but, above all things, he would seek by prayer of GOD HIMSELF Who gave it, and sent it, what was the true meaning of it ; and he would wish to know the meaning merely in order that he might fulfil the same.

It is most evident, that it is only this temper of mind which can come to the true understanding of the Scriptures ; it is not learning and scholarship which is needed, but meekness, and an obedient spirit. This is very clear from the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our LORD calls the “ wise and prudent,” from whom all saving knowledge was hidden ; and our Blessed SAVIOUR rejoiced in this dispensation of God, Who had hidden this knowledge from them, and had revealed it to ignorant and illiterate men, whom they despised on account of their ignorance of the Scriptures. It was not their learning that hindered the

Pharisees from coming to the truth, but their pride and presumption; it was not their ignorance that brought the Apostles to CHRIST, but their teachable, humble hearts; therefore it was given to them to understand parables and the mysteries of the kingdom.

Now where shall we find such in these days? where shall we find a sincere desire to know the truth and to follow it? And yet in this consists the whole of religion;—to love that which GOD commands, and to desire that which HE has promised, so that the heart may be there fixed, where true joys are to be found. All other things are but snares of the great enemy: and yet even in religion itself we may easily find every thing else but this alone.

If pure religion is a matter of party and controversy, of disputes and outward profession,—intended to make us comfortable and satisfied with ourselves,—then surely it is a broad way, and one on which many travel; but if it is such as is to humble us more and more in our own sight, if it is to be received with fear and meekness, with a temper exceedingly desirous and anxious to fulfil the whole will of GOD in every part; then, surely, out of “many” that “are called, few are chosen:” straitened “is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Then we may see the full force of our LORD’s parable of the Sower; and why, out of four different kinds of hearers, HE speaks of one class only who receive the Word unto the saving of their souls. Thus does the power of His Word overtake us, and find us out,—holding up, at all times, as it were, a glass before us, in which we may see our own hearts. HE has gone forth as the Sower of seed unto the end of the world, scattering it on all sides in great abundance; part is gathered up by the birds of the air, part is cast on shallow rocky ground, part of it is received among thorns; but wherever HE scatters, there are some, it is to be hoped, who receive with meekness the Word which is able to save their souls; bringing forth fruit which HE carefully gathers, and lays up in His treasure-house, so that nothing is lost; as we shall all find on the great day of recompense.

SERMON CCXXXI.

THE FAITH THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD.

I JOHN v. 5.

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that JESUS is the SON of GOD?”

IN the passage from whence the text is taken two things are evident; first, that there is no overcoming the world, without faith in JESUS CHRIST; and secondly, that there cannot be faith in the SON of GOD, such as Scripture speaks of, unless it overcomes the world.

But now is it not too manifest, wherever we cast our eyes, that Christians, as we are called, do not in general overcome the world, and therefore may we not conclude that, so far, they cannot have the faith which is here spoken of?

For to overcome, and obtain the victory, must of course mean a contest and a struggle, and the final mastery in the struggle; and yet can it be in any way said, that people in general live and die, as if they had mastered the world; that they spend their lives under a higher, and nobler, and better principle, subduing all along and getting the better of its temptations, “overcoming evil with good;” so as to be at last, as St. Paul says, “more than conquerors through HIM Who loved us?”

But if we do not overcome the world, then with regard to any saving faith in CHRIST, such as the Bible speaks of, it must be said now, as it was of old, in mournful surprise at the fewness of the number, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

For may it not be said that the generality, even including the better sort of Christians, are content to make as it were a sort of compromise with their three great enemies, which they renounced at Baptism, the world, the flesh, and the devil?

They are careful not to fall into great crimes, such as would very much disturb and agitate their consciences, and cover them perhaps with shame; they are desirous for the most part not to lose their Christian privileges and consolations; but are also desirous to obtain what gratifications they can by the way; and when their minds are thus divided between the two, between things future and unseen, and objects which are seen and present, we know which must have the advantage. Religion will indeed come in for its share, as on Sundays, or on Sunday afternoons, and for some little time, and distracted attention, morning and night; but their treasures, that is to say the objects they are engaged about, will be temporal; and therefore their hearts also will be on earth.

They would not for the world be thought profane persons and unbelievers, like Esau, who "lightly esteemed his birthright," gave it away under the pressure of immediate want, and it is said, "did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way."

This, indeed, they consider the part of men of the world, and hope and think that it may be far from being their case.

Esau, indeed, put himself without the covenant of promise, which he openly gave up and renounced; and so far is more like those persons now, who openly give up the outward ordinances of religion, public prayer, and the Holy Communion, or live in notorious crimes, selling their birthright, their heavenly inheritance given at Baptism, for a mess of pottage.

But there are examples of others who continued within the covenant, which the lives of most Christians resemble. There are God's chosen people, the children of Israel, in the wilderness, who in their hearts kept turning back to Egypt; there are the same who had not courage and hope enough to go up to the promised land, nor faith to value it. There are the Israelites in the land of Canaan, who instead of overcoming and casting out their enemies, which God showed them they might have done by His strength, did it only by halves; the consequence of which was, that they continued as thorns in their sides: when indeed they

were much oppressed by them, then they turned and called on GOD, and HE succoured them in their distress. Showing thereby what HE would be to them, if they would have given themselves up entirely to His service : but they had no heart for this, for as soon as they were relieved they fell away again.

This is a true but sad picture of the state of most Christians, keeping as it were by halves with the world, they fall into many temptations, which they would otherwise have been free from : they do not drive out their spiritual enemies by prayer and fasting ; but only resist them from time to time, and when brought into distress by them, they are relieved by calling upon GOD and by the comforts of religion ; and with this they are satisfied. But as for thoroughly mastering their corruptions, this they never in earnest attempt to do, with any real seriousness or consistency.

With regard for instance to the desires, which are the temptations of youth, the victory over these, which faith and the Christian law of holiness requires, is no less than purity of heart. How little this is the law by which people think it necessary to chasten and examine and regulate their thoughts, as being the law by which they will be judged at the last Day, on which their Christian well-being now and their final condition depend ;—how little this is the case, each person may be left to judge for himself.

One proof of our state is obvious, that what the Prayer-book calls “ deadly sin,” is thought scarcely any sin at all if it is followed by marriage ; that is to say, that as long as the injury is made up in the eyes of the world, the crime against GOD is considered as a matter of little or no consequence.

Now if persons judge of others by this worldly rule, instead of that of the Gospel, much more will they be apt to palliate and excuse their own bad thoughts by a law of this kind, and so be content to fall short of that holiness without which no one shall “ see God.” For it is very evident that the laws of the New Testament are more directed against the thoughts than they are against outward actions.

Take again the love of money. The miseries of great covetousness, the bad name it has in the world, and the extreme folly of it, are such that we naturally desire and endeavour to keep clear of it, from common worldly prudence. And with regard to any

great change of circumstances for the better, it adds so little to our happiness in this world that few would wish it.

But with regard to the high standard of Christian perfection, by which we are required to be dead to this world, to have no cares for the morrow, to be scrupulously just and honest, and charitable to the utmost of our power, and even beyond our power, Christians seem to have given up all thoughts of aiming at this.

As if Holy Scripture did not mean what it says, when it cautions us so much on this subject; as if “the *deceivableness* of riches,” which it speaks of, were such that all the world are under the influence of it except ourselves, because we do not think ourselves rich; for no man yet ever did think himself so. We hear its words indeed, “Blessed are the poor,” but without any desire for seeking that blessedness, be we poor or rich; we hear its warnings, “Woe unto you that are rich,” without any wish to escape from that woe; or rather as if we were wiser than the wisdom of God, endeavouring to obtain the riches, but thinking we shall avoid the woe! This is the kind of way, I say, in which we are content to look upon these things, be we poor or rich; for otherwise, if poor, how could we be dishonest? if rich, how could we be proud? how could we in either case be discontented?

I will mention another instance to show that Christians do not even think of living by that faith which “overcometh the world.”

The Government under which we live, having been once professedly Christian, has required that all work should be suspended on the Sunday, and, as a matter of course, this day has been given up to ease and rest, if not to religion; so that for a person to profane the Lord’s day is considered a sort of outrage to society; and they are but few to keep them in countenance even with the world in so doing.

It is, therefore, no great proof of Religion, none at all of that state of holiness which Christianity requires, for persons to go to Church once or twice of a Sunday; for it is what common respectability and decency would suggest; and if it is only to hear a new or a popular preacher, it is only indulging their own fancies. And yet it must be said that the Christianity of very many, yea, even of the better kind of persons, does not extend much beyond this. The Church of God, indeed, requires this—that the Lord’s

day should be kept holy, but the world requires it also. When you come to those things which the Church of God only, and not the world, requires; such as keeping Holy days and Saints' days, and joining in public prayer on week days, when opportunities are given, and men are not hindered by necessary business;—what a difference do we find at once! And if this be the case in matters of public duty,—that people will go as far as the world will go with them, and no further,—how much more it is to be feared is it the case in those duties which lie open only to God and their own conscience; in those three great ways of Holiness, in which our SAVIOUR has instructed us, such as secret Fasting, secret Prayer, and secret Alms! If they do not in public duties look to the pattern set before them in Scripture, but only to the conduct of the generality, is it likely that they seriously think of the eye of God at all? or seek His favour with any sincere endeavours?

Nor can these things only be said of the people, but of the Clergy also: more religion, or at least more appearance of it, is demanded of them by the world, and perhaps it is to be found in them in some degree for this reason,—because the world requires it. But the Law of God has but one rule of the utmost strictness of life and holiness for all persons alike: all persons are alike called upon to “love God with all their heart and soul and strength;” this can make no difference between the Clergy and other men, for every person is bound to do this, and a Clergyman cannot do more. Heaven and hell are as important to one as to the other: life is equally short to both to prepare for it: eternity is as long to one as to the other. Each must use *all* his endeavours, and another can do no more.

But now if this be the case, that Christians do not overcome the world, but make a sort of compromise with it, by which they make as much of it as they can, then it is manifest that they have not that faith in CHRIST, as the SON of GOD, which Scripture speaks of. In the present day there is often a mistake of this nature respecting faith in CHRIST. It is very generally said, that persons must believe CHRIST to be their SAVIOUR; and since all believe this, so as not to doubt the fact that JESUS CHRIST is the SAVIOUR of the world, there are two ways, in one of which mankind are apt to deceive themselves; they either think they must *feel* that CHRIST is their SAVIOUR, so as to *feel a personal*

interest in His death, which often comes to be nothing else but an effort of the fancy or imagination; or else they suppose, without any serious reflection at all, that somehow, by God's mercies in CHRIST, all will be well at the last. For this is the thought that pacifies and keeps quiet the consciences of men of the world respecting religion.

But Holy Scripture surely gives no sanction to either of these opinions. Faith is indeed considered to be the very life of the baptized Christian: as necessary to the life of his soul as the air which he breathes is to his body. But it is a faith by which he lives and moves and acts always; as it is described, "Faith working by love."

Nor are we baptized into a faith of this sort; we are not baptized into a hope that we shall some day feel this interest and assurance; but into the Name of the HOLY TRINITY, and with these words, that the baptized person "shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of CHRIST crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue CHRIST's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." Nor are we baptized merely into the words that CHRIST is our SAVIOUR, much less that we should feel HIM to be so; but into the Apostles' Creed, which contains, we know, a great deal more than this; it contains the whole of the Trinity, as our MAKER, and REDEEMER, and SANCTIFIER; and the circumstances of our SAVIOUR's Incarnation, and sufferings, and death, and Resurrection, and Ascension, and His final Judgment. The first words of it are of "God the FATHER ALMIGHTY," and the last are "everlasting life." And the faith in this, which is required, is doubtless such a faith as Scripture always implies,—not a mere emotion of the mind, not an empty assurance, not a naked and barren intellectual assent and knowledge, but—a living principle of action, by which the thoughts and actions of a Christian are as different to those of the natural man as light is from darkness: by which his natural self, as it were, his frail, low, human imaginations, are lost in the Divinity of JESUS CHRIST; in Whom he lives, and moves, and has his new regenerate being; as one alive from the dead; and in whom CHRIST lives, so that he himself, as it were, lives no more.

This is the faith which overcometh the world. For if CHRIST

lives within him by His HOLY SPIRIT, CHRIST will be manifested in his actions also; and therefore his life must be in some manner like that of his SAVIOUR'S. He cannot indeed live the same life, but he must live the same *kind* of life. If he lives by faith in JESUS CHRIST as GOD, so that CHRIST lives within him, he must constantly be doing actions of kindness, as JESUS CHRIST did; he must suffer with meekness all manner of indignities; he must be humbling himself very much; he must be always praying.

Now, some persons speak of the Atonement of JESUS CHRIST as if this one vast and unspeakable mercy was every thing which we had to believe; others say the same of His example, or of His commands and teaching; others of our assenting to and acknowledging the necessity of His guidance by His HOLY SPIRIT; and others put forth especially His speedy Coming to judge the world, as the great point which we are to believe. But Holy Scripture and the Apostles' Creed, into which we are baptized, will not allow us to choose one thing, as it were, for ourselves in this way; but would have us believe in HIM as GOD, and therefore to think every thing respecting HIM of infinite importance.

We must show by our lives that we are thankful to HIM as our MAKER; that we put our trust in HIM as our SAVIOUR; that we are guided by His teaching as our SANCTIFIER: we must live as those who look to HIM as our LAWGIVER,—who expect HIM as our JUDGE. We must live as those who believe in His CROSS, by being dead to the world; and in His burial, by being buried with HIM in Baptism from worldly desires. We must show that we believe in His Resurrection, by being risen with HIM; in His Ascension, by having our affections with HIM in Heaven. And all this is implied in our believing in HIM as the SON of GOD.

Unless we do this, unless, I say, we act up to this, or endeavour to do so, our religion is a mere shadow, and not a substance: and no wonder that we do not overcome the world; for the temptations which the world offers are not shadowy and merely imaginary, but real. The worldly man does not think it enough that he should imagine and fancy himself to be rich; but he spends his life, directs his actions, that he may become so: it is in religion only that he is contented with a fancy, without acting accordingly.

And therefore our Blessed LORD has taken great pains to assure us, that there is nothing to be depended upon in religion but our words and actions only: for by them it is, we are told over and over again, that we shall be judged at the last Day,—by them only we shall stand, by them only we shall fall; every thing in the Gospel seems to set this before us in as strong a way as possible: those who will come to HIM on that Day with fancies, and feelings, and assurances, will be rejected of HIM with those most terrible words, “I know you not; depart from ME, ye *workers* of iniquity!”

This it is, our JUDGE HIMSELF assures us, that makes all the difference between the house on the sand and that built on the rock, *i. e.* our works, our way of life from day to day: this it is upon which the whole matter depends. It is said expressly, “he that heareth these words, *and doeth them,*” is like the man who built his house on the rock. He “that heareth them, *and doeth them not,*” is like the foolish man who built his house on the sand.

The *doing them*, or *doing them not*, is the whole matter, I repeat; and unless we amend our daily lives, not our fancies and wishes, not our resolutions only, but our thoughts, our words and actions, our dealings with mankind, and our dealings with ALMIGHTY GOD; unless, I say, we amend these, we shall many of us find this to be true when it is too late.

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

SERMON CCXXXII.

A CONTRITE HEART THE BEST SACRIFICE.

PSALM li. 17.

“ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”

WHENEVER we approach to ALMIGHTY GOD through JESUS CHRIST, whether it be at the Holy Communion, or at the season of CHRIST'S Death and Passion, or at the commemoration of His first and second Coming, there is no service on our part so acceptable to HIM as that of a contrite heart; for thus only can we offer up ourselves in union with that One great Oblation which CHRIST hath made for us.

We have no hope but in the Cross of CHRIST; none of us are saved but by the Cross of CHRIST; our salvation, therefore, depends entirely on the temper of mind with which we venture to approach the Cross of CHRIST, and receive the doctrine of CHRIST crucified.

And, therefore, the difference between good and bad men in Holy Scripture may be said to consist in this,—whether they have or have not “ a broken and a contrite spirit;” the degrees of their acceptance with GOD seem to depend on this : and in consequence we shall find in those who are most of all approved, some expression that implies this temper. Thus Abraham, the father of the faithful, says, that he was before GOD but “ dust and ashes.” What better words could express a penitent than “ dust and ashes?” It is written of Moses, that he was “ the meekest of

men;" and what is meekness, but the fruit of a contrite spirit? Holy Job exclaims, "Now mine eye seeth THEE; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The Prophet Isaiah says of himself, "Woe is me, because I am a man of unclean lips." Jeremiah was "a man of sorrows." There is no more solemn confession of sin, than that of Daniel, the man of loves. And a penitent most deeply stricken with a sense of his condition, will find no words that more strongly express a broken spirit than the Psalms of David, "the man after God's own heart." Again, St. Peter, so pre-eminent among the Holy Apostles, fell down at CHRIST's feet, with great earnestness, begging HIM to depart, for "he was a sinful man." As he was the chief of Apostles, so is he also the chief of penitents. And any one may perceive that the love which St. John expresses, proceeds from a broken spirit. And St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles, is known to all the world as one who considered himself as the "chief of sinners." The same temper may be found in all the saints of the Ancient Church: they are ever expressing, in various ways, their self-abasement before God.

If we come to those of our own Church, who have been most remarkable for piety, we find the same spirit. The laborious and devout Hammond emphatically applied to himself those words, that he was the "chief of sinners;" the good Bishop Andrews, in all his Devotions, ever speaks of himself as "a very great, a very great sinner," "a sinner worse than the publican," "a sinner beyond all men," "the chiefest—the very chiefest of all—the very greatest of sinners." And Bishop Wilson, in his Prayers, seems ever seeking for words to express the greatness of his humiliation, and eagerly taking hold, as it were, of every sentence or incident in Scripture which implied mercy to the penitent. The holy Herbert at his death praised God that he had "practised mortification, and endeavoured to die daily, that he might not die eternally:" and left his poems to the world only that they might "turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul;" so much are they all expressive of God's consolations under deep penitence. Many more such instances might be mentioned.

Thus may it be found consistently of all good men, that the

better they are, the more are they always of a "broken and contrite spirit." And this fact may be explained by the very nature of all Christian graces and duties; for a good man (if any one can be so called) is he who practises and cultivates these duties and graces. Now we find that there is nothing which Holy Scripture insists on so earnestly, so repeatedly, and so constantly as this;—that our salvation does depend upon our works, "the deeds done in the body;" that exactly in proportion to our works done in this life, will be our everlasting portion: it implies that this is the subject, beyond all others, on which men are in some way apt to be deceived, often alluding to it with expressions such as "take heed," "be not deceived," and the like. And it sometimes describes to us the proceedings of the Day of Judgment, and the assigning of their different conditions to all mankind on that day; in all of which it takes pains to assure us, that it will be most strictly according to our works in this life, the use of the talents committed to us, the fulfilling offices of mercy, the having our lamps burning, the having laid up treasure in Heaven beforehand; that it will be reaping precisely according to what we have sowed; that those who will be rejected, will be condemned because they have not worked righteousness; that those who will be accepted will be rewarded, because they have *done* these works; that those who have not *done these works*, will be like those who have been building a house on the sand; that those who have *done these works*, will have made their foundation on a rock. And the eternal reward will be in exact proportion to the work done, for among the good some will bear thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold. This doctrine, of our portion being according to our works, is a point which Holy Scripture is most earnest in insisting on, as being that in which we are, all of us, apt to deceive ourselves.

But then, again, we know also, that our salvation does depend on our faith in CHRIST; and therefore we may suppose, that not only will those who will fail, be rejected for want of this faith; but even among those who have this faith, that those who have most faith will be most happy hereafter, according to their various degrees of faith.

Now in whatever way these two doctrines may be explained, we must take Holy Scripture as we find it, and believe as it is

written. But the two things may, perhaps, be reconciled in this way—a broken and contrite heart alone can embrace CHRIST Crucified; and he who is most diligent in works of Evangelical righteousness, will be most contrite, and therefore will most of all have faith in CHRIST Crucified.

Thus, if we take those three duties in which our LORD has instructed us, as the means of obtaining holiness, viz. alms, fasting, and prayer, we may, I think, consider it quite certain from GOD'S Word, that he who most of all practises these duties (*i. e.* most sincerely, earnestly, and constantly) will be the highest in Heaven: for we are often told, that alms is laying up treasure in Heaven; we are assured, that prayer is always answered; and that GOD will reward openly him that fasts secretly. And it will be evident, on a little consideration, that he who practises these duties most conscientiously, will most of all be brought to a broken and contrite spirit; for, indeed, prayer is seeking for aid beyond ourselves, and therefore is an expression of helplessness; and fasting is a practical confession of unworthiness; and alms a sort of sacrifice, which implies both. But the effect of these duties may be easily seen:—let any one who is full of carelessness and self-confidence, give himself up to these duties for one day only, and he will find his spirit has become, in some degree, altered and changed, more broken and contrite. This will be sufficient to account for the effect which the constant practice of these duties has on the temper of holy persons.

In many other ways it may be shown, that all the practices of a good man tend to produce a broken and contrite heart, and therefore bring him to CHRIST Crucified. He is the best of men who most of all considers and directs all his conduct under the most lively sense of the Day of Judgment. This is the thought that magnifies every sin he has committed,—every omission, every negligence;—it is in the light of the JUDGE'S Presence he views them all; it is the light of this, in which he walks daily: it is in the scale of that never-never-ending portion that is to ensue, in which he weighs his actions; at least, as far as he is a good man, he endeavours to do so;—how, then, can he be otherwise than of a broken and contrite heart?

Or, again:—a good man is he who lives under the strongest and most abiding sense of GOD'S Presence, as being about his

path and about his bed; and therefore piety is often called the Knowledge of GOD: and surely to know HIM Who is infinite Holiness, infinite Love, and infinite Power, may well make a sinful man to hate his own sinfulness, and fill him with a contrite spirit at the thoughts of it. And the more he practises reverence in Church, and other things which imply a consciousness of GOD'S Presence, the more is he thus humbled.

Or, again;—a good Christian is he who meditates most seriously and practically on the life and death of CHRIST: and surely he who most thinks of CHRIST'S sufferings, will most lament the sins that occasioned them: the more he contemplates HIM, Who being equal with GOD, lowered HIMSELF to the very dust, to teach us humiliation and repentance, the more he will have a spirit broken.

Or, moreover, if we consider *the promises made to good men* in Holy Scripture, they are all made to them so far as they partake of this temper of a contrite heart; it is “the poor in spirit” to whom the kingdom of Heaven belongs; those “that mourn” receive the consolations; “the meek” inherit the kingdom; it is to those alone who are heavy-laden that CHRIST offers rest; it is with the contrite the HOLY SPIRIT will dwell; it is those who have most of all humbled themselves as little children upon earth, who will be highest in Heaven,—the place in Heaven will be exactly according to the lowliness of mind.

And not only this, but *those external circumstances* are most blessed, which tend most of all to produce a broken spirit: and woe is awfully denounced on all those conditions of life which most of all keep us from poorness of spirit. The blessing is pronounced on the poor; woe upon the rich; woe on those who are spoken well of; blessing on those who have all manner of evil spoken of them falsely. To receive a recompense in this life, to obtain good things or consolation in the world, is, we are told, a great evil: the chastenings of GOD are the greatest signs of His love. And why all this? but that natural evil and hardship brings us most of all to a sense of our true condition,—such as it is in the sight of GOD and His good Angels: and the advantages of this life lead us to forget it.

In like manner in all *the parables and incidents* in the Gospels, it is the temper of a contrite spirit which is alone received;

the man whose prayer is heard, is one who beat on his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" it is over the penitent that the Angels rejoice; it is the returning penitent whom the father, in the parable, receives with welcome; we hear nothing of righteous men. Those whom we know to be blessed at last are,—the beggar Lazarus full of sores, the dying thief, acknowledging his unworthiness: those whom our LORD most accepted and approved were those who were most of all of a broken and contrite spirit; for these HE performed His miracles, and to these HE gives His promises.

It is said, indeed, that our LORD companied with those who were opprobriously called "sinners;" with publicans rather than Pharisees: but this was not because they were worse, but because they were very far better than the Pharisees, and, being conscious of their sins, were open to amendment.

From these considerations it would appear, that the great difference between mankind consists in men being aware of their danger or not; in being more or less fully sensible of their condition: that all good works which GOD has prepared for us to walk in, bring us to know GOD, and to know ourselves, and, consequently, to a broken spirit. And that the effect of a careless, thoughtless, sinful life, and, indeed, of every sin, is to close the eyes, so that we cannot see; and the ears, that we cannot hear. And therefore it was that the holy David, when he fell into sin, was taken with great consternation and alarm respecting this one point, lest GOD should take from him His HOLY SPIRIT. And there is nothing more frequent in Scripture than to speak of wicked men as those who have no eyes to see; of the light within being darkened; of the things that belong unto their peace being for ever hidden from their eyes; of GOD hardening their hearts; of His sending upon them a strong delusion, so that they believe a lie; of His giving them up to a reprobate mind; of His taking from them His HOLY SPIRIT; of their quenching the SPIRIT: and in words more awful than all, though perhaps meaning the same thing, of the sin against the HOLY GHOST, for which there is no forgiveness, either in this life or in that which is to come. And thus the description which our LORD has given us of the careless sinner is this, that he says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;

and knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Now I do not know any consideration more awful, more thoroughly worthy of our most serious regard than this : for it is evident that we have all great reason to fear, lest GOD should take from us His most HOLY SPIRIT, Who dwells with the contrite : there is nothing whatever we have so great reason to fear as this ; and the more so, as our own experience will tell us that there is nothing which in general is less feared than this. For, otherwise, how is it possible that men should live as they do ? What is more common than that indifference and unconcern with which religious duties are neglected, and worldly objects are pursued ? It might be supposed, from our conduct in such matters, that we could recover ourselves whenever we pleased ; that we can turn to religion when more at leisure, at any time ; that we can commence to-morrow the exercises of prayer and fasting, notwithstanding our having neglected them to-day and yesterday. And the mind is exceedingly busy to put half-deceits on itself ; to catch at half-truths of religion, and rest itself upon them, rather than look the full truth in the face. For instance, we think that faith and repentance will at any time set all right ; that a broken and contrite heart will ever be accepted ; that the prayer of such will ever be heard. All which is very true : but who shall give us faith and repentance ? who shall make that heart contrite to-morrow which is presumptuous to-day ? It is most certain that nothing can do this but the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD ; and it is equally certain that that HOLY SPIRIT will depart from those who reject HIM ;—that it is HE Who darkens the eyes, and shuts up the ears, and hardens the heart. So the WORD of GOD declares to us again and again ; and so our own experience abundantly testifies ; for, can it be said of Christians in general, that they are at all adequately aware of their danger ? Are we not conscious that there are many to whom warning and advice is in vain ? And are there not many of the best among us who have no thought whatever of aiming at those degrees of Christian grace and perfection, which many of the first Christians trembled to fall short of ? Do not even the better sort among us contemplate their neglect of those higher attainments with unconcern ? Does not then the whole case become rather a matter

of degree than any thing else? One can omit great duties without being uneasy or concerned; another can be easy and unconcerned at the omission of small ones: one omits daily public prayer with unconcern; another neglects the same on Sundays with the same indifference; another is, perhaps, careful daily to attend public prayers, but attends without reverence and devotion, and is not concerned. Now when we consider that, perhaps, all these outward differences may be merely owing to one having had more talents lent him, if it be the case that they are all unconcerned alike at falling short of God's best blessings, have we not reason to fear for ourselves? Does not the whole of our danger throughout consist, as it would appear from Scripture, in self-confidence? Does not the very fact of the blessing being given to the broken spirit and contrite, imply that all the danger is in not being so sufficiently? Does not, therefore, the very ease and indifference with which we are apt to hear, and see, and act, afford us a reasonable cause for apprehension? Is not our very unconcern enough to concern us? Are we not frightened at our want of fear? "For blessed is he," we are told, "who feareth always."

The holy men of whom we have been speaking thought it necessary to love God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength; and ever feeling how far they fell short of this great object and desire of their lives, they were ever more and more of a contrite spirit; and thereby obtained all the blessings, present and future, which the Gospel has to bestow.

We, alas! not sincerely intending any thing of this high standard of perfection which Christianity requires, are rather pleased at being what we are, not affected with a sense of our manifold failings, and therefore not touched with a sense of all God has done, and will do for the penitent; we are self-confident; being not conscious of our past miscarriages, or present lukewarmness and indifference. Nay, it is to be feared many of us have our consciences defiled with past sins, which we have so little mourned over, that we have almost forgotten them. And when we have forgotten our sins, when they are blotted out of our own memory, then we think that they are blotted out of God's Book. And, indeed, if this

were the case, then the less we mourned over past sins the better; for so we shall doubtless the sooner forget them. But if it be indeed the case, that those sins are most of all remembered by our ALMIGHTY JUDGE, which are most forgotten by ourselves; if the wounds on our consciences are the more fatal and irremediable because they are less felt; then surely there is nothing so much to be dreaded as this self-confidence, which arises from forgetfulness of past sins.

This is not said with the purpose of alarming any one unduly, for no good is ever done by an over-statement of the truth, but in order to bring ourselves really to consider the matter; for it cannot be doubted but that we are all of us, in these days, apt to be very little apprehensive of the greatness of our danger.

I mean, that we are in general apt to feel more safe and secure with respect to our final welfare, even though we go on as we now do, without any very earnest amendment of life, than the general tenor of God's Word will justify us in being. And, also, that we are by no means duly impressed with the consequences of our failure, with the result of things for good or evil, considering that interminable expanse which is spread out before us. Surely this must be allowed by all who will calmly consider the sayings of our LORD, and compare them with the standard of Christian duty, which is generally received, and according to which we measure ourselves.

Now there is one thing which I think is a very great assistance to any one who would desire to obtain this contrite spirit,—that the Church appoints not only the season of Lent, but also the Friday in every week through the year, as a day of Fasting, to lament our sins, and to consider CHRIST Crucified. And, therefore, to say nothing of Church Authority, and the great blessings ever attached to a temper of loyal obedience to such authority, and the most holy associations with which such seasons and days are connected; were we to consider it merely as a matter of Christian expediency, nothing can be more beneficial, than that we should have a time set apart for the purpose of obtaining from God a contrite heart,—to lament and bewail our sins;—to come to a sense of the magnitude of our danger. For we know what an assistance appointed

days and seasons are ; that which can be done at any time is generally left undone.

And of course daily to pray for a contrite heart is no better than hypocrisy, if we are not at the same time taking all means in our power to obtain it.

With regard to those assistances for this end which Holy Scripture and our Church prescribe to us, such as fasting and abstinence, if any one doubts the obligation to practise them, all that we would say is, to entreat him to deal honestly with God and his own conscience in this matter.

With regard to those questionings on the expediency, advisableness, or use of these duties, which have arisen in late years, under the specious plea of their being modes of seeking for expiation beyond the one and great Atonement, such are doubtless those snares of the great enemy, which he considers best suited to the temper of this age ; and which would never have been successful did he not cloke them under the appearance and semblance of doing honour to HIM who has declared, “ Woe unto you that are full ! ” “ Woe unto you that laugh now ! ”

Such questions are specious snares to wavering and weak minds ; but, like all such wiles of the great enemy, are immediately scattered whenever we become really serious and earnest in religion. For it is probable that there never was a good and holy man who did not practise these duties ; and although they are bound to be so strictly secret, yet I know of no instance of a holy person, either in the Church Catholic from the beginning, or in our own Church, but of whom there appears evidence that he practised these duties.

For notwithstanding any such easy speculative theories, to entangle or quiet the conscience, whenever any one by affliction or remorse for some great crime, or by any other means, by the mercy of God, is brought to a serious sense of his condition, to a more lively impression respecting the great truths of the Gospel, eternal judgment after death, Heaven and hell, CHRIST Crucified, and, above all, of the mercies of God through CHRIST, he will at once practise these duties, unavoidably, as it were, and necessarily, as the natural expression of a devout mind conscious of sin.

There are indeed some sins, some evil habits, or, as Scripture

says, "evil spirits," especially those into which youth are liable to fall, which cannot be expelled but "by prayer and fasting."

Yet not only this, but with respect to sins that are past, the effects of them on the mind, the hardness of heart which they necessarily occasion, without some strong self-denying discipline of this kind, can scarcely be removed. It is prayer indeed which in such cases is the healing and restoring medicine of the soul; but the extreme value of these self-denying practices is that they so wonderfully and mysteriously, as if from some secret connection with the Cross of CHRIST, dispose the heart to prayer.

Add to which, that the efficacy of prayer is chiefly promised to that temper which these practices produce.

The mercies of our HEAVENLY FATHER are indeed according to His own declaration, as much beyond our poor conception as Heaven is above earth; "more willing to hear than we to pray, and wont to give more than we desire or deserve."

But let the Bible be examined from the first page to the last, and it will be found,—from its doctrines, its precepts, its examples, its histories, its types, its parables, its miracles, its promises, its blessings, its woes, from the graces which it singles out in man, and marks with approbation, from the duties it commands, and the dispositions it requires,—it will be found *that those boundless mercies of our HEAVENLY FATHER are dealt out in exact proportion to our humiliation.*

SERMON CCXXXIII.

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 6.

“ This is His name whereby HE shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

NEXT Sunday Advent begins, and Advent is the season in which the Church turns our thoughts to the Coming of CHRIST; or, rather, to His two Comings, or Advents, both that in great humility which is past, and that in glory for which we look.

On this Sunday, therefore, the next before Advent, the Church orders that instead of a portion of one of the Epistles, or letters of the Apostles, there should be read in the Communion Service a part of the Prophecy of Jeremiah, in which our LORD's Coming had been foretold of old to the Jews.

Our LORD was there spoken of by Jeremiah, about six hundred years before HE came into the world, as a KING Who should “ reign and prosper, and should execute judgment and justice on the earth.”

I have often endeavoured to explain to you how this prophecy of a kingdom has been fulfilled; that the Church is the Heavenly Kingdom which our LORD has set up on earth, according to what had been thus foretold; that all of us Christians are His subjects in that Kingdom, that the Bible is the written Law thereof, and the ministers of the Church bear rule therein under CHRIST, according to that Law.

But now I would direct your thoughts to another point. Jeremiah the Prophet said, also, that the name whereby this

Heavenly KING should be called, should be "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Upon which I would have you observe, first, that when it is said in the Bible that any person should be called by any particular name, it is not so much meant, that this name should be commonly given him, but rather, that he should actually be that which the name signifies. For instance, Isaiah foretold that our LORD should be called "IMMANUEL¹," yet we do not commonly address our SAVIOUR in prayer, or speak of HIM by that name. But the meaning of the Prophet was, that that Most HOLY CHILD, Whose birth he was then foretelling, should really be what the word IMMANUEL means, that is, "GOD with us²,"—GOD amongst men. And this we know and confess concerning our SAVIOUR.

And thus, in like manner, we must understand the Prophet Jeremiah here to foretell that our LORD was to be THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and should be so acknowledged. And so it is, this prophecy is fulfilled before our eyes; the KING, the RIGHTEOUS BRANCH that has been raised unto David, the KING Who reigns over GOD'S Church, an Heavenly Kingdom on earth, is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

We acknowledge HIM to be the LORD, that is, the true and living GOD; for no less than this is meant by the word here translated "THE LORD." It is in the Hebrew "JEHOVAH," GOD'S Most Holy Name, which no creature may share; that name which our SAVIOUR claimed as His own, when HE said, "Before Abraham was, I AM³." This Name GOD declared to be His peculiar Name, when HE sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel, telling him he was thus to say unto them, "I AM hath sent me unto you⁴." For JEHOVAH, which is here rendered "THE LORD," means "HE IS;" and was GOD'S most sacred Name, signifying HIM Who alone IS of HIMSELF, and does not depend for His Being (as all of us do) on another.

So that our SAVIOUR is here set before us, in the language of prophecy, as the very JEHOVAH, the true and living GOD. But that is not all; His Name is not only the LORD, but THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And these two parts are closely con-

¹ Isaiah vii. 14.

² Matt i. 23.

³ John viii. 58.

⁴ Exod. iii. 14.

nected; if HE were not the LORD, if HE were not very GOD, then HE could not be OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. For no *man* can justify his fellow-creature, or be his Righteousness; for we are all, even the best of us, miserable sinners before GOD. "No man," that is, no mere man, like ourselves, "may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto GOD for him; for it costs more to redeem their souls: so he must let that alone for ever⁵." Nay, not even the holy Angels of Heaven, although they do GOD's pleasure, and hearken to the voice of His Word, and see His Face continually, not even they ever impart Righteousness to men. The LORD HIMSELF, GOD's own true SON, is the only RIGHTEOUSNESS, the only JUSTIFIER of sinful man.

We of ourselves, and as left to ourselves, are full of sin and evil; in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing. What good we would wish to do while in our natural state, we are not able to do⁶. Not that GOD made man like this; far from it: man was made at the first in GOD's own image; but by sin, by setting up his own will against GOD's will, man corrupted his nature, and caused that the thoughts of our hearts should be from our very birth, as one may say, "only evil continually⁷." The heart of man, though at first the image of GOD, became "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked⁸." We are born in sin and iniquity, and as we grow up, increase day by day and year by year the load of our corruption and wretchedness, by our own actual sins. The Devil has become prince and god of this world, and leads the greater part of those who dwell therein captive at his will, most miserably pleasing them, seducing, disquieting, and deceiving them by vain shows, and by promising to satisfy their unreasonable and unlawful desires, while thus, year after year, he binds his chains closer round his victims, and makes them more and more his own, marks them more and more with his own evil image.

Thus were men wretched sinners, "enemies" to GOD "by wicked works⁹," unjust and unholy before HIM; and no man, no not one, had power of himself to break the Devil's chain, and to turn with his whole heart unto GOD.

⁵ Psalm xlix. 7, 8.

⁶ See Romans vii. 14—24.

⁷ Gen. vi. 5.

⁸ Jer. xvii. 9.

⁹ Col. i. 21.

So miserable and helpless was the state of guilty man. But GOD had pity on us in this our misery, and GOD's own SON came down from Heaven to be the Righteousness of such as should be knit unto HIM, and continue in HIM unto the end. HE came for this purpose down into this wretched world, and took upon HIM our nature, that in His own Person HE might restore it to more than its first Righteousness. As man HE fulfilled all Righteousness, HE obeyed GOD's will and law perfectly in all things, and then, having no sin HIMSELF, HE submitted, of His own free will, to the sufferings and death due to sin for us, and as our HEAD. This was done in order that we, suffering together with HIM here, might be afterwards partakers of His Life and Glory. For as HE died for our sins, so did HE rise again to justify us, that is to say, to endow us with His Righteousness.

This our Church teaches us in the Homily of the Resurrection. This is the mighty power of "the LORD, Whom we believe on. By His Death HE wrought for us this victory, and by His Resurrection hath HE purchased everlasting life and Righteousness for us. It had not been enough to be delivered by His death from sin, except by His Resurrection we had been endowed with Righteousness." And again, "HE died to destroy the rule of the Devil in us, and HE rose again to send down His HOLY SPIRIT to rule in our hearts, to endow us with perfect Righteousness."

Our LORD thus having offered a full and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of men, and being raised again, became the JUSTIFIER of all that should receive HIM, believe in HIM, and be knit unto one with HIM.

We by Baptism were made members of CHRIST, or, as the Scripture saith, "We are very members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones¹." We, if we be His indeed, dwell in HIM, and HE in us. "For, know ye not," saith St. Paul, "your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you²?" If we then be knit unto HIM, and HE dwell in us, then must we needs be partakers of His Righteousness. For although we be wretched helpless sinners of ourselves, yet we have HIM dwelling in us, Who is perfect Righteousness, and, by His indwelling, justifies, endows with Righteousness even us; and therefore is HE well called, THE

¹ Eph. v. 30.

² 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. So that though our Righteousness be not of us, be not in any sense our own, yet is it *in* us, our Righteousness is **CHRIST** dwelling in us.

But although **HE** that dwells in us is perfect Righteousness, yet in us, even in the best and most faithful of us, there still remains also the opposite principle of sin and evil³. Even the very best of us do many things we ought not to do, and leave undone what we ought to do; nay, the very holiest and most perfect of the good actions of **GOD'S** Saints, though springing from **GOD'S** own **SPIRIT**, are yet so alloyed by the evil that remains in them, can by no means bear the strictness of **GOD'S** most holy and heart searching-judgment. Yet so long as we keep a truly and lively faith in **CHRIST**, and so long as by that faith **CHRIST** dwells in us, we are accounted righteous before **GOD**, and are accepted by **HIM** in spite of our sins, which are forgiven us and blotted out, for the sake of **CHRIST**, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, Who made satisfaction for our sins, and Who has knit and joined us unto **HIMSELF**. The Righteousness of **CHRIST** imparted to us, is acceptable to **GOD** in us, and we are accepted for It, although in us, even the best of us, it be alloyed by many a sin and imperfection. For, these sins of imperfection in those who abide in **CHRIST**, **GOD** blots out, for **CHRIST'S** sake, while **HE** bestows on these His faithful servants grace to amend their hearts and lives more and more, and to grow more and more conformed to the image of His **SON**. When we are justified, therefore, we are endowed with **CHRIST'S** Righteousness, and although sin remains even when we are new born unto Righteousness, yet **GOD** forgives that sin, while we abide in **CHRIST**, and lays it not to our charge.

We are first justified or made righteous in this way in the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, being thus made members of **CHRIST**, and therefore partakers of His Righteousness. For this reason we say in the Belief in the Communion Service, that "we believe One Baptism for the remission of sins."

After this, our first justification in Baptism, it depends on our faith, whether we continue in this state of Righteousness; for it is "by faith we stand⁴;" "by faith **CHRIST** dwells in our hearts⁵;"

³ See the Ninth Article of our Church.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 24.

⁵ Eph. iii. 17.

by faith we continue one with HIM. Therefore our faith, like Abraham's faith, is reckoned or imputed to us for Righteousness, because it is by faith we cleave unto THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, by faith HE dwells in our hearts.

But, then, this means a lively faith ; a faith that "worketh by love;" a faith that keeps the commandments of GOD ; "faith without works is dead:" such faith cannot, therefore, keep us in union with CHRIST, Who is Life ; it is the very faith of devils, who never can have part in CHRIST. Therefore, our LORD HIMSELF says, that "if we keep His commandments, we shall abide in His love," *i. e.* in HIM⁶; for the fruit of a true faith is the keeping of the commandments of GOD. And to those who thus love and obey HIM, HE gives a special promise that HE and His FATHER also will dwell in them. He saith, "If a man love ME, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him and make Our abode with him⁷."

Here our LORD plainly describes one who is in a justified state, who is made righteous in GOD's sight, not for the merit of his own works, but for the merit of THE LORD HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, Who dwells in him ; to Whom he was first joined in Baptism, and in Whom he now abides by faith which worketh by love.

It is therefore most true, and it is a most comfortable truth, that if we serve GOD faithfully, and heartily, and constantly, the sad imperfections of our service are forgiven us for the sake of our indwelling SAVIOUR, and the faith by which we abide in HIM is imputed to us for Righteousness.

But if any man falls away into gross, wilful, and deadly sin, if a man neglects GOD's worship, if a man loves the world, if a man takes pleasure in sin, if a man has wronged his neighbour, and keeps that which he has unjustly gained, that man must not think that his faith will justify him, or that his sins will be forgiven him for his SAVIOUR's sake. For he has no true faith ; he has fallen from CHRIST, his actions prove it ; he hath at present neither part nor lot in the matter, for his heart is not right before GOD⁸.

⁶ John xv. 10.

⁷ John xiv. 23.

⁸ Acts viii. 21.

I do not say, that such a person cannot be restored to a state of Salvation, GOD forbid! but I only say, that so long as he continues in such wilful and deadly sin, he has no faith; his union with CHRIST is, for the time, broken, and his confidence of being forgiven and received for CHRIST's sake, if he have any such confidence, is an idle dream, a deceit of our great enemy to ensure his ruin.

The conclusion of the whole matter, the lesson we should all bring home to our own hearts, therefore, may be stated in the words of the HOLY GHOST by St. Paul, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates⁹?"

Let us obey this heavenly message; let us consider well what our state truly is in GOD's sight; for remember, what we are in His sight, that we are in truth, and no more. Either we have fallen from grace, and are reprobates, have lost the favour of GOD, and are in danger of everlasting destruction, if we should die; or else we are Righteous before GOD, because we have JESUS CHRIST, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, dwelling in us.

But if HE be in us, where are the signs of His indwelling? They in whom CHRIST dwells are surely guided by CHRIST'S SPIRIT: they hear His voice, and follow His steps.

"He that saith, he abideth in CHRIST," saith St. John, "ought himself also to walk even as HE walked¹." Not that we can be altogether as our most HOLY LORD; far from it: but there must be an endeavour, a hearty persevering endeavour, to follow His examples and obey His Word, or else CHRIST cannot be in us, and we are not in the faith.

CHRIST cannot abide in the heart where sin is allowed; and if CHRIST be not in our hearts, we are fallen from that state of Righteousness into which we were in Baptism restored.

This is, indeed, a very awful and alarming view of our condition; but it is the true one, according to the Bible, as it was understood and explained in the ancient Church. And it is far better to be alarmed for a time, yea, to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, than to deceive ourselves with a vain

⁹ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

¹ 1 John ii. 6.

confidence, that we may go on in sin, and yet be justified by faith; for that confidence will most certainly fail us on the Great Day of our trial, for then we know, (for it is most plainly told us,) we shall be judged according to our works².

If the sense of grievous sin in times past, and of a very imperfect repentance now; if a consciousness of utter unprofitableness alarm us, let us only, all the more, call upon God with all earnestness and perseverance, for forgiveness of what is past; let us be the more diligent and careful in the use of all means of gaining His favour and mercy, and perfecting our union with CHRIST. Wherein especially are to be reckoned the devout receiving of His most precious Body and Blood, which were given for the forgiveness of our sins; and the humble serious study of God's most Holy Word. Let us strive, also, with increasing vigour and earnestness to make perfect what is wanting in our repentance, and to practise those good works which are contrary to the evil deeds we may have at any time committed.

Have you ever used bad language? practise the more now a religious silence, and a restraint over your tongue, with a continual care, that what you do say now be likely to do good, as it once, alas! did evil. Does your conscience charge you with having drunk to excess? deny yourself even what another might take. Have you ever wrongfully deprived another of what was his? be not content with restoring it, (though remember, without this there is no reasonable hope of forgiveness,) but give now as largely as you can of what is your own. Have you ever neglected God's service? now attend it the more regularly, putting aside the business of the world, whenever you possibly can, even on week days, for the purpose. Finally, every night consider how you have spent the day, what good works you have done, in what respect you have advanced in holiness and righteousness.

And let it be your earnest endeavour that every day some progress should be made, every day some sin should be more subdued, some virtue better practised; that every day, in short, you may approach, in some degree at least, nearer to that Pattern, Whom we must be ever copying.

² Rev. xx. 13.

This is the only way to grow in faith, to abide in THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and to be accepted with GOD in CHRIST, and for CHRIST'S sake, whenever HE comes to judgment.

For none will be acknowledged by HIM on His Day of Judgment as His own, but those who have kept His Commandment, and in that way have continued in His Love.

For he that professes to believe our LORD'S Word, and to hope for salvation through HIM, but does not keep His sayings in his daily life, that man has built his house on the sand, and it must fall³.

³ Matt. vii. 26, 27.

SERMON CCXXXIV.

WATCHING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST.

REVELATION xxii. 12.

“And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

It is a sad and fearful thing to think of, but I fear it is true, that the great doctrines and truths of our religion have, with very many of us, less power over our minds, less effect upon our lives, every year as we grow older.

And yet it is our duty as Christians, to be continually using ourselves to remember and to consider more and more the reality and vast importance of these eternal unseen things, and therefore their influence over us ought, on the contrary, to increase. We ought to accustom ourselves to have regard to them, rather than to the things of this world, from which we are so soon to be parted, and where we shall be soon forgotten.

But if, on the contrary, we have let ourselves form the habit of thinking almost always about things connected with this life, such as, how we can be most comfortable, and get on best in this world, and what people will say and think about us, how we can appear of consequence in their eyes, and so forth, it is no wonder that our hearts and minds become drawn off from the great truths of religion, and unused to think of them with any earnestness.

And thus, while men acknowledge with their lips the certainty of those great changes which are most certainly fast drawing upon us, such as death and judgment, they have continually less

regard to them, and learn to live as if they were never to give an account of themselves, but were to continue in this world for ever.

We all know we must die before long, and probably there was a time in the life of most of us, when this consideration of death was to us more or less serious and even heart-stirring; but when people have been much and long engaged in worldly business, or in worldly enjoyments, their minds become so strangely hardened, (especially if they be in good health,) that they see and hear of people's dying all about them, with very little thought that it must be their own turn before long. And thus it comes to pass that so very many people, especially middle-aged and old people, seek the good things of this world as eagerly, and place their happiness in them as much, as if they expected to live on in this world for ever. And the same sort of observation would apply to the effect on our minds of the great doctrine of CHRIST'S coming to judgment.

There is something in the short and simple accounts the Bible gives us of that great Day of CHRIST, so truly awful, that in childhood and in early youth, the minds of many persons are much struck by them. Perhaps, some of us may remember a time when the expectation of the sights we are then to see, for a little while took great hold of our minds, and we seemed as though we could not forget it.

But, alas! as we grow older, it too often happens that our minds become so taken up with these present worldly things, with worldly cares and earthly trifles, that we hardly ever think of the judgment to come, except when something we hear forcibly draws our mind to it for a short time. In short, we do not keep up the habit of looking for CHRIST'S coming, and of remembering the great account we are to give before His awful judgment-seat. And then, by natural consequence, we have but little regard to it in all our doings, and learn to live as if we had no account to give, unless it be to the foolish and wicked world, whom, indeed, we are apt enough to try to please, loving, as we do, to be approved in the eyes of men.

It is indeed but natural, that our feelings should be more moved by a truth the first time we hear it, than after we have become used to the thought of it; nor are we to blame our-

selves for this. It is not to be expected that you should be as much affected and alarmed by what I may state to you to-day out of GOD'S Word, concerning the Day of Judgment, as if this was the first time you had heard of it. But it is plain, that every time we hear of it, every time we read of it, we ought to learn to live more and more as those who are indeed to see this awful Day of Judgment, and are then to be tried and judged by JESUS CHRIST, according to His Word.

If we do not learn thus to prepare ourselves for His Coming, we have heard of His coming in vain.

Perhaps we are persuading ourselves in our hearts, that CHRIST'S Coming will not be just yet; but that as HE has delayed it so long, that we need not doubt but that HE will put it off longer. It is fearful to consider how many people now think like this, and find comfort in the thought, find comfort in their own fancy that their SAVIOUR and JUDGE is not coming yet.

Surely, it must be of those who think like this, and so by this thought are encouraged to live according to their will, to take their own pleasure, and follow their own way;—surely, I say, it was of such as these our SAVIOUR spoke those awful words:

- “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My LORD delayeth His Coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the LORD of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for HIM, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth¹.”

Plainly, then, unless we would greatly displease our SAVIOUR, and bring ourselves into immediate danger of intolerable misery, we must not allow ourselves to give way to any thoughts the devil or our own evil hearts may put into our mind, that we need not look for the Day of Judgment just yet.

We must be always expecting it, always preparing for it.

And as your minister, let me solemnly advise and entreat you to begin now, if you have not begun hitherto, to accustom yourself often to think of that judgment, of what the Bible says concerning CHRIST'S Coming and that awful Day; and this not only

¹ Matt. xxiv. 48—51

when you read your Bible, when you come to Church, and when you are praying at home, but at all times; at every few minutes of leisure, and even in the midst of your worldly employments, if they will admit of it, use yourself to think of the solemn account you are to give for all you do at CHRIST'S judgment-seat.

And whenever your minds are moved and affected by the expectation of these things that are most surely coming on us, take good care that your thoughts lead to some good. Begin at once to prepare yourself to meet your God in judgment. Begin at once to find out what you must set right in your disposition, your heart, and way of life. At once pray to God, humbly and earnestly for CHRIST'S sake, to help you to find out what there is in you that is displeasing in His eyes, and to amend it. And do not mind what you give up, what you go through, if you can but prepare yourself.

Oh! when that Day shall come, as it most certainly will come, and we shall be placed each one of us to answer not for our lives, but for our everlasting Salvation, before HIM Whose eye is now always watching us, how little will the hardest earthly trial, how less than nothing will the greatest worldly gain appear, when set against the blessing of being then acquitted, then received and forgiven!

Let us consider what St. John saw, when the sight of this great day was set before his eyes in a vision, even just as it will appear to each one of us in reality; and would that God would teach us to keep the expectation of that always before us!

"I saw," says St. John, "I saw a great white throne, and HIM that sat on it, from Whose Face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works²."

Then, according to our SAVIOUR'S own words in St. Matthew,

² Rev. xx. 11—13.

“The SON OF MAN shall sit on the throne of His glory; and before HIM shall be gathered all nations, and HE shall separate them (oh, awful, everlasting separation!) as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and HE shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. And they that are set on the left hand shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal³.”

Then shall they that are counted worthy be made like unto the angels of GOD, yea, like unto GOD’S own Eternal SON, their LORD and GOD, ever after to be with HIM, and to see HIM as HE is, receiving from His blessed presence peace and joy such as have never yet entered into the heart of man. At that same day, the world and all the works that are therein shall be burned up with the fire of GOD, and the prisons of hell, the places of eternal torment, shall be opened. The wicked and the worldly shall in vain call on the mountains and on the rocks to “fall on them, and to hide them from the face of HIM that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the LAMB⁴.”

Then shall the impure and unholy be forced to stand, in their shame and their terror, before the face of perfect Holiness, and Purity, and Justice. And were it not that our SAVIOUR was to be the JUDGE, who could stand in that day? All our hopes for that day stand only on His mercy and on His love to man; but through that mercy and love, they will be found clothed with His own righteousness who have served HIM and sought His grace humbly and faithfully on earth.

But we must not deceive ourselves. HE has clearly warned us that when HE comes again HE will acknowledge none but those who have faithfully prayed, and endeavoured to do what HE commands, those whom HE, at His coming, shall find watching and prepared.

“Take heed to yourself,” says our LORD HIMSELF, “lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that Day come upon you unawares⁵.”

From this warning we learn, that if we would really watch for our LORD’S coming, if we would really be prepared for the Day of

³ See Matt xxv. 31—33. 46.

⁴ Rev. vi. 16.

⁵ Luke xxi. 34.

Judgment, we must of necessity beware of two things; the first of these is the love of ease and pleasure. Surfeiting and drunkenness, that is, selfish fleshly pleasure, has a tendency so to overload a Christian's heart, as quite to unfit him for earnestly watching for CHRIST. The second is the love of gain, which, together with the cares of life, as I before said, so engage the mind of many of us, that we begin to think of this life as all that we are concerned about, and thus our minds become really unfit to receive the most concerning truths of religion: such, for instance, as the knowledge God has vouchsafed us of the great changes, the everlasting things, that are drawing near us.

Therefore, he who would be found watching, he who would be placed at the Right Hand in that last awful separation of the sons of men, must be sparing in the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, and must be very vigilant that his heart be not entangled with its cares.

And unless we thus take care that the flesh and the world do not distract or harden our hearts, it is vain to expect that we can fix them as we ought, in constant, earnest expectation of CHRIST'S Coming.

And a continual looking for the Coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST to judgment is the very principal part of our religion. So at least St. Paul says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST⁶." And when in the Lord's Prayer we daily say, "Thy kingdom come," whatever else we pray for, we do certainly pray for this full and final establishment of His glorious kingdom.

By constantly praying and endeavouring to be prepared for our LORD'S Coming, we may be fit to use such a prayer, but not else. Again, therefore, I say, beware of fleshly pleasures; beware of worldly cares; for both these effectually hinder us from preparing ourselves for the Judgment.

Then be always trying to set before yourself that last great and awful scene. Think, if you had seen the vision as St. John did,—seen the sheep and the goats for ever separated one from another; had seen the chosen and accepted servants of CHRIST raised to heavenly glory; and the idle, the self-deceiving,

⁶ Titus ii. 13.

the lukewarm, cast out with the profane and the unbelieving, into torments without end or hope; do not you think you would be without excuse if you ever forgot, ever ceased to bear in mind, in all your doings, the fearful vision you had seen?

Then consider God's own SON has given you His Divine Word and Testimony of the truth of all this. Will you not believe HIM? If the Bible be God's Word, are you not as much without excuse in not preparing for Judgment, when you read of it there, as if you had seen it yourself in a vision? Nor is it true that we cannot act upon what we have not seen ourselves, for we do often, in the commonest matters of life, take for granted and act upon a number of things we do not see. It is not because we have not seen a vision of the Day of Judgment, that the expectation has little power over us, but because we have not used ourselves to think earnestly and often about it, and because our thoughts have been used to dwell on other things. And for this soul-destroying evil there is but one remedy, one method of cure, which I have already described: first, the denying and deadening of the flesh; secondly, separation from the world, I mean, from the cares of the world; and, lastly, a constant habit of seriously thinking on these great changes that are drawing on, with a careful endeavour to make these thoughts practical, and to live always suitably to them. This is the only way to be of the blessed number of those whom the LORD, when HE cometh, shall find watching.

SERMON CCXXXV.

SUDDEN DEATH.

MATTHEW xxiv. 42.

“ Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour your LORD doth come.”

IF we would but open our eyes to see, and our hearts to understand, then we could not fail to observe, that the truth of what we hear or read out of God's word is daily confirmed and proved to us by the events that happen all about us. For instance, our SAVIOUR warns us against laying up “ treasures where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal¹.” And do we not continually witness the speedy waste or loss of goods laid up by men with the labour and care of many years? Some unforeseen accident, some act of violence or fraud on the part of a neighbour, makes a man poor in a moment, when he has been long and earnestly striving to raise himself to wealth. Thus we ourselves are allowed to see the moth and rust corrupt, and the thieves break through and steal, that we may the more fully be convinced of the reasonableness of our SAVIOUR's warning, and that our hearts may be weaned from the love of worldly wealth. Somewhat in the same way, our own experience proves too, as certainly, and most sadly, how well HE knew us, Who taught us to “ watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation² ;” for whenever we become careless about ourselves, and neglect the duty of prayer, some temptation is sure to come upon us, and before we are aware, we have fallen into some grievous sin.

Now, in like manner, the same Teacher and GOD of Truth hath said to us, in another place, from which I have taken my text :—“ Watch, for ye know not what hour your LORD doth

¹ Matt. vi. 19.

² Ibid. xxvi. 41.

come." "But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the SON OF MAN cometh."

Your attention was called to this passage in the very last sermon that was preached from this pulpit³, and you were taught how we should understand it, not only of the sudden Coming of CHRIST to judgment, but also of the unexpected way in which death often comes upon us, at the very time we are least looking for it. GOD hath thought it good to make His own comment on that text during the last week. HE has made awfully clear, at once, both its truth, and the justice of that explanation of it which was then made to you. One of those that heard that sermon with you, was, within four-and-twenty hours after, seized with an illness, which, (after she had lingered on two days speechless, and for the most part of the time, to all appearance, insensible,) ended in her death. She was here with you last Sunday afternoon, apparently as well as any of you; but her body is now in the grave, her soul in another world. It is perfectly plain that there is just as much likelihood that a death as sudden might happen to any one of us. We may be here to-day, and next week in the grave; or rather, we may be, any of us, to-morrow, or before to-night, in another world.

A person in my situation, as a minister, has frequent occasion to observe how often, how very often, death comes suddenly; at least, people have no direct and certain warning of its approach, no time in which they heard themselves called upon to prepare for its immediate approach.

In the richer classes, the friends of the sick are too apt to defer telling them of their danger, till it becomes too late to get ready to meet it. In many cases, sick people themselves will cling obstinately to whatever little hope may remain, and letting their minds dwell rather on this little hope of life, turn them away from the necessity of preparing themselves for death. In other instances, again, the very first sign of great and immediate danger that appears, is the failing of reason. So that

³ This sermon will be found in the second volume of this series, Sermon xxxviii.

to depend upon the chance of repenting on a death-bed is, indeed, to trust to what is most uncertain, in a matter where our condition for everlasting is concerned, and where we ought to depend on nothing but what is quite secure. A day, an hour, may bring any one of us, it may be, to death itself, or it may be into a state of insensibility, and in that we may continue till death. We too, any one of us, may be senseless to-morrow; our bodies may be in the grave by next Sunday. And surely this is a very awful condition to be in, when we consider that after death is the judgment. As soon as we die, either our spirits will be taken by the Angels to Abraham's bosom, like Lazarus, or else, like that wretched man of whom our SAVIOUR tells us in the same part of the Gospel, we must lift up our eyes in torments, and long in vain for a drop of water in that unquenchable flame wherein the wicked are tormented after death, even before the Day of Judgment.

It is very possible that, before next Sunday another of us may pass into that unseen world, of endless rest, or endless misery. It is most likely, before a year is past, some of us will be gone there. Who, we cannot even guess; but experience teaches us that death often comes upon those first who seem least likely to die. But all this is, as we know, but little considered. Young people too often turn away their minds altogether from all thoughts of this kind, for fear they should spoil their pleasure and gaiety. And this is much to be regretted, because the minds of young people are, in many respects, more apt to be moved by such considerations. As we grow older, our hearts too often become hardened; middle-aged persons, and old persons too, frequently form a habit of talking in very serious and solemn words about sudden death and of the Judgment after, without themselves trying to be fit to die. There are, indeed, some, who are considerably distressed by apprehension and alarm about sudden death, who do not take more pains than other people to be strengthened by GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT and a good conscience against the terrors of death. To be afraid of death is one thing; to be preparing oneself for death is another. But unquestionably, their state is most lamentable, and affords least room for hope, who do not think of death at all, who have neither fear nor well-grounded hope.

But who are they that watch? What are the marks, it may be asked, that we are awake, and, according to our duty, looking out always for the Coming of CHRIST, and of death as His messenger?

To this question there is one plain answer: that no man can be said to be watching, no man has any reasonable ground for thinking he is ready, unless he is careful how he lives. We must, it is certain, be constantly taking pains with ourselves, or else we are not even trying to be ready. And unless we look often into the state of our lives and hearts, to see whether we be ready, and to correct whatever is amiss, we are by no means likely to be well prepared. For a right preparation for death, though doubtless a gift of God, yet, like all His other best gifts, does not come of itself, but must be sought for, or at least preserved, by care and pains, by earnest, constant prayer, and a diligent use of the means of grace. From all this it is clear, that if we know that we do not examine ourselves continually, do not search out to see what is wrong in our way of going on, we are not, I may say, even beginning to prepare for death. And it is equally plain and certain, that it would not be much good to examine ourselves, unless we were willing to amend, and to set right whatever was wrong in us, though it might cost us much trouble, and much violence to our own wishes. For we cannot see God, we cannot be prepared for death, without following after holiness⁴, and no man can be said to follow after holiness who does not try to get the better of his bad habits and wrong dispositions; and we cannot get the better of these without trouble, pains, and self-denial, and these must be long-continued. In short, we cannot be ready to meet death with a good hope in CHRIST, unless we are His disciples in deed as well as in name; and HE HIMSELF has said, that no man can be His disciple who does not bear his cross and come after HIM⁵.

Again, it is plain that no one can keep himself prepared who is not used to think often and earnestly about those great changes that are coming upon us, such as death itself, and the state after death, the God Who shall judge us, and the hope we have of standing in that Judgment. A person must give his mind frequently to these things, or he cannot keep his heart disentangled

⁴ Heb. xii. 14.

⁵ Luke xiv. 27.

from this world and fixed on a better. And I hardly need say that it is above all things necessary that we should keep ourselves indifferent to fleshly pleasures and worldly pursuits, or else we shall be sure to forget the coming on of death.

And it is in this way that most people do become so thoughtless about the shortness and uncertainty of life. Their hearts are engaged in pleasure or business belonging to this life, and they hope they may continue long in this world, till at last they persuade themselves they shall. They see that though some die, others live on for many years, and they hope they shall do so too, and thus, even until extreme old age, men cling to the prospect of a longer life, and put off preparation.

They will not hear the voice of that Heavenly Love which is graciously warning us—"Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always⁶!" And mark also these last words, "Pray always." For here is one great part of the secret of preparing for death. When the faithful humble Christian really strives to give up the world, and to keep his flesh in subjection—when it is his constant endeavour and care to keep his heart always raised above fleshly and worldly enjoyments, and fixed on Heavenly hopes—when he tries to approve his actions and words and inward thoughts to God—then he finds how little he can do, how weak he is in himself. But he does not give up the holy endeavour, but taking courage in the assurance that he can do all things through CHRIST strengthening him⁷, he strives on, but joins to his striving, earnest unwearied prayers for that grace of CHRIST, which can alone raise him above the world, and make him conqueror over sin, and fit him for a better state.

He finds it at times (especially at first) hard to attend as he ought to the prayers he offers up, either at home or in Church; but he does not suffer himself to give up for that, but is ever trying, in spite of discouragements, to be more attentive. He prays to God for the Spirit of prayer; he takes care not to be

⁶ Luke xxi. 34—36.

⁷ Phil. iv. 13.

impatient if he cannot feel as he wishes, but resolving to be earnest and persevering in his prayers, he leaves all the rest to HIM, Who has promised that such prayers, though offered up in discouragement, shall not be offered up in vain.

It is a great comfort to him to come to pray often at Church, for it is GOD'S own chosen place of prayer; and he would be glad to be like Anna, that holy widow of whom we read in the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel, that she departed not from the Temple, "but served GOD with fastings and prayers night and day⁶." Surely this is the way to fit ourselves for death.

I have spoken of the necessity of examining our own hearts for this end. And we must also give heed to GOD'S word, whether we hear it or read it, for by that word we are to be tried, and our great endeavour should be now to try ourselves by it, and really to fashion our lives according to it.

Above all, the Christian who would be prepared for death whenever it may come, should surely be often and with deep devotion at the Lord's Table, for there he may feed by faith on the Body and Blood of CHRIST; and he knows that by a frequent and careful receiving of that Holy Sacrament, he is best securing to himself the fulfilment of that blessed promise of everlasting life our SAVIOUR HIMSELF gave us.

"Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the Last Day. As the living FATHER hath sent ME, and I live by the FATHER, so he that eateth ME, even he shall live by ME⁹." In that blessed feast we receive the Food of immortality, and the solemn earnest and pledge of everlasting blessedness. Therefore the Christian who is labouring to be ready always to meet death, will be frequently and devoutly making at that holy altar the solemn memorial before GOD and man of his SAVIOUR'S Death and Passion, seeking for himself there, by being a partaker of that altar, the fulness of those Heavenly blessings in which we participate through HIM Who, by His Incarnation, has imparted His own Holiness and Life to our sinful and perishable flesh, by His Death hath destroyed Death, and by His Resurrection hath restored to us a blessed immortality.

⁶ Luke ii. 37.

⁹ John vi. 54 57.

It is weak and foolish indeed for people to suppose that such a life as this, a life of constant preparation for our end, is gloomy or unhappy. Only consider that we must die some time or another, and that we know not how soon death may come, and it is impossible not to see, that the only way to be truly and reasonably happy, is to be always prepared for death. It is true, indeed, that after all, very good people, the best sort of people, may be afraid to die. This is no wonder, for it is an awful thing for such beings as we are to come to the end of our time of trial, and to meet our GOD in judgment. Yet sometimes the thoughtful Christian, when he thinks of the blessed state of those who are with CHRIST in Paradise, longs to be there, and that longing is sweet and comfortable—that longing to be with his SAVIOUR, which is far, far better than any thing here.

I would, indeed, solemnly warn you, warn you again and again, not to trust to any feeling of your mind whatever, as a proof you are in the right way; but to look always how you keep CHRIST'S commandments, and thus give the sign of loving HIM which HE requires. But, if your conscience does tell you, on strict and close examination, that you are serving GOD in your common every day life, and trying your best to please HIM, then you may find comfort in these longings for a better state.

Then, to use the words of a great teacher of holy living¹, “If thou feel the ardent desire for everlasting blessedness poured upon thy soul, and thou wouldest even long to depart from the body, that thou mightest see the brightness of GOD'S Glory without the shadow of change; then make thy heart wide, and with all readiness receive this holy inspiration. Render abundant thanks to the Divine goodness, which deals with thee so graciously, visiteth thee with mercy, exciteth thee to fervent devotion, and raiseth thee up with power, lest thou shouldest fall by thine own weight to the things of earth. For it is not through thine own thoughts, or thine own endeavours that thou receivest this, but only from the condescension of Heavenly grace, and GOD'S gracious respect unto thee. And remember that this is vouchsafed unto thee by HIM, that thou mayest grow in goodness,

¹ Thomas à Kempis.

and in a greater humility, that thou mayest prepare thyself for future conflicts, that thou mayest cleave unto thy SAVIOUR with the whole affection of thine heart, and study to do HIM service with a fervent zeal."

Thus turn inward consolations to this practical account, growing thereby in holiness as God has willed you; and then, indeed, they will greatly help you on in your course to Heaven. And if it should be your lot to see your death draw near, you will have reason to hope your comfort will not forsake you, because it is sound, substantial, and reasonable. A Christian who has spent his life in trying to make himself, by God's help, fit for Heaven, meets death calmly, when he sees it come, casting himself altogether on his SAVIOUR. If men should ever greatly exult and triumph in death, surely it is only when they have led very blameless lives. Those who have grievously offended God, and are yet very imperfect, ought not to wish that they may be worked up into a state of confidence on their death-bed; earnest repentance, with a calm, humble, trembling hope, better becomes them. And, in fact, we find that many, even of the best men, as far as we can judge, have died rather calmly and quietly, than with any kind of strong excitement.

I will mention to you one example, a Bishop² who died in Scotland last summer on St. Peter's Day, the 29th of June. I must explain to you, in the first place, that the Church of Scotland was robbed of all its property a great many years since, and that property was most of it given to one of the sects or parties of dissenters. In consequence, even the Bishops there are quite poor men. This Bishop, of whose death I am now speaking, though a learned as well as a pious man, lived without even one servant. He used to light his own fire and prepare his own breakfast. His only attendant was a young man, whose practice it was to come to him in the middle of the day to get ready his dinner, and do whatever else was necessary, and then go away. At last, this Bishop became very feeble, and at times suffered this person to stay all night in the house. However, just towards his death the good Bishop was very much taken up with reading a very beautiful old book,

² The late bishop of Moray, who died, as here described, on St. Peter's-day, 1838.

lately published anew—the name of this book is “Learn to die;” and it is full of most comfortable and profitable meditations. On the 28th of June, St. Peter’s Eve, feeling rather better, and being very much occupied with his book, he would not let the young man sleep in the house, on purpose that he might be quite to himself. He came, however, in the evening to assist the aged Bishop to bed, and the Bishop told him to come again in an hour, as he wished to read on in this book, of which I was speaking. When the hour was out, the Bishop was still able to go on, and was very anxious, if possible, to finish it, and put off his going to bed for another hour. He found himself, however, unable to read quite to the end of it, and told his friend to mark the place with a tape, and put the book by, and then went to bed, telling the young man to come to him again at seven o’clock in the morning.

At the time appointed the young man came, and found the
 • LORD had taken His aged servant to HIMSELF. The good old man was quite dead: he had been strong enough to close his own eyes, and draw over his face a small white napkin, which he had carefully kept under his pillow for some time, and which his attendant had noticed, though he could not guess what it was for, and did not like to ask. He then had crossed his hands upon his breast, and had “fallen asleep”—to use the language of the Bible—without the least struggle. In this state he was found the morning of last St. Peter’s Day. The ease, and calmness, and tranquillity with which he died, must have been quite extraordinary. His arms were placed in the most careful way, in the form of the blessed Cross, each hand laid flat on the opposite shoulder.

Such a death seems to me most enviable. It is comfortable, indeed, at such an hour to be supported by the kindness of friends; but there is surely a more full, and sweet, and perfect consolation, when the Christian falls calmly asleep at last, looking only for comfort and support to HIM Who alone can then give it effectually.

This good man had been warned that he was likely to be found dead some morning; and his answer had always been, that he wished to learn to die alone. Surely he seems to have been watching, to have been ready; for he learnt to make the LORD entirely His support at the hour of death. And we know that

“Blessed are those servants whom the LORD, when HE cometh, shall find watching³.”

Perhaps some one may be inclined to ask, “What can I do? I wish I could live and die like this; but it seems to me I cannot, I find it hard to watch, so hard even to pray.” I cannot now answer this question at length, but I may suggest, first, that if we will do our best, and give ourselves up to God, HE is willing and able to work in us to will and to do this, as well as every thing else that is good, of His good pleasure⁴. In HIM, therefore, we must put our trust. But we must, on our parts, determinedly make every sacrifice, give up every pleasure or pursuit that prevents us from preparing for death. We must make every exertion, for very often the reason why we can do nothing right or good is this, that there are some things we know we ought to do, which we will not do; and then God is justly displeased, and withdraws His help from us. And then whatever we gain or keep, we are losing our own souls.

³ Luke xii. 37.

⁴ Phil. ii. 13.

SERMON CCXXXVI.

THE LORD AT HAND.

PHILIP. iv. 5.

“The LORD is at hand.”

WITHIN a week we shall come to that holy and blessed day, on which we have in joyful remembrance the birth of our LORD and SAVIOUR.

It is not without a purpose that the Church has, from the very first, appointed such days and seasons: they are ordained for the intent, that the great and affecting truths connected with them may sink the deeper into our hearts, and have the more influence upon our lives. But it depends on ourselves whether we derive the advantage we ought from them. Undoubtedly, if our hearts and minds are taken up with worldly cares and vain pleasures during these holy seasons, we shall be nothing the better for them, but rather shall be in a more dangerous state, having greater negligence, a greater abuse of mercy, for which to answer at the last.

For why do we all put aside, so far as we can, our common worldly employments on the LORD'S Day, and on the other great festivals? Plainly, it is not that we may spend our time in idleness or amusement; but that we should be the better able to fix our whole attention, for a season at least, on holy and heavenly things.

But, when such a festival as Christmas comes, can we at once, by a single effort, disentangle our minds and set them free from cares and idle thoughts, if we let these at all other times beset and enslave our souls? Doubtless, it would be impossible.

When we have formed habits of any kind, they cannot be shaken off at once like this ; and habits of mind, habits of thought, are, of all other habits, the hardest to alter. And, indeed, what could be more absurd than to suppose that a man could live his working days as a child of this world, and his Sundays and festivals as a citizen of heaven ?

So that we see that the benefit and edification we shall derive from the observance of great and sacred seasons, depends very much on the kind of life we lead, and the way we train and govern our thoughts at other times, while our hands are necessarily engaged in the common business of life.

But then, it may be asked, is there any one who does not suffer in some degree from his intercourse with worldly men, and from the continual vexations and trials of temper, which are brought upon us by the unreasonable or wicked conduct of persons with whom we have to do in the world ? Who is there, again, among the poor, who can keep his mind altogether free from anxious care about the morrow ? And the rich, on the other hand, they have the care of preserving wealth, and many temptations to luxury and indulgence. Who amongst them is not the worse for these ? Who does not feel his heart at times turn towards earthly, rather than towards heavenly things ? How then can such as we enter into the holy, blessed joy of Christmas ?

One thing we can do, which is to prepare ourselves for the right and sanctifying observance of these festivals before they come. To help us in so doing, the Church has appointed the season of Advent before Christmas, Lent before Easter. And continually, both in her daily lessons out of the Old and New Testaments, and still more in those that are more solemnly read from the Altar, the Church is now calling upon us to be ready to meet our God. At first she summoned us to awake out of the sleep of sin, now the warning has become more distinct and urgent, "The Lord is at hand," and "There stands One among you, Whom you know not¹." For in many ways, even in this life, faithful Christians may meet their God. They find Christ in the persons of the poor and distressed, when they help them. They find Him present in His most Holy Word, and in the offices of devotion, especially

¹ John i. 26.

here in His Holy House. In all these things is the LORD at hand, and amongst us. But surely, when on Christmas-day we meet together to join with Angels and Archangels in hallowing the FATHER'S thrice holy Name, for that His SON became man, took upon HIM our flesh and nature without sin for our deliverance from sin, then, surely, will HE be amongst us, though we see HIM not; nay, HE will be in us, if we try our best that the house of our soul may be meet to receive HIM. To this end, we should endeavour, during this next week, to turn away our hearts from the world and our own selfish pleasures, that they may be fit for our GOD to dwell in. And, more than this, we should try with all our heart and mind to meditate how great the mercy, how unspeakable the condescension, when GOD'S Only-Begotten SON, the WORD, as at this season, became man, that HE might restore us poor, fallen, sinful creatures to the state of GOD'S children, and to a blessed hope for the world to come.

Adam, though he was made of the dust of the earth, yet would have lived for ever, free from decay or death, in Paradise, by eating of the Tree of Life. But when he displeased GOD by eating of that other tree, then he was allowed no more to eat of the tree of life; and the Spirits of Heaven, who had been his friends, and had sung for joy at the creation, were now to prevent him tasting that food of immortality. But yet, at that very time, GOD promised him a DELIVERER, One Who would subdue his great enemy; and in HIM it was GOD'S purpose he should again find the food of everlasting life. When CHRIST came, as at this season, it was as "The Bread from Heaven, whereof a man should eat and not die²." HE took upon HIM our flesh, with all its infirmities, that we by grace, through faith, might be knit into one with HIM, made very members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; that, as HE partook of our human nature, so we, through unspeakable grace, should be made partakers of His Divine Nature³, His Nature as GOD. These are great secrets, into which none can enter but such, as, renouncing the world and flesh, will give their minds to holy meditation. Without this we cannot know, no, not even faintly and imperfectly, those blessings, that untold salvation, righteousness, and glory, which

² John vi. 50.

³ 2 Pet i. 4.

CHRIST as at this time brought into the world. But this we know, that whatever blessings HE then brought unto those that should forsake their sins and believe in HIM, all these blessings were bestowed on each one of us in our Baptism. For then we were made, each one of us, members of CHRIST and children of GOD. Thenceforth, if we have indeed abode in HIM by a true and living faith, CHRIST has been in us the Fountain of righteousness and holiness, the Seed both to soul and body of an everlasting and most glorious life.

The blessings, then, that CHRIST as at this time brought into this world, were not then brought to others, but to each one of ourselves. But what comfort, it may be said, is that to those who are fearful that they have not abode in CHRIST, to those whose manifold and sad transgressions in times past, whose many waverings and evil thoughts even now give them cause to fear, that though they have been in CHRIST, they are now more or less outcasts, and have but little or no portion in HIM? For these is there any consolation? Does Christmas bring these any joy or hope? Is the thought of their Baptism to such persons any thing but a reason to dread a more grievous condemnation?

Now, to this I answer, that for such as these, unless there be true and deep and lasting repentance, there is, indeed, no joy or comfort at this season. But if they do indeed repent, if they can offer "the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart," as sincere mourners for their sins, then there is comfort for them. Then it "is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world," as at this time, "to save sinners;" nor is he excluded, who can add, "of whom I am chief⁴." There is hope, then, and comfort, for the worst of us, if we do but turn to our LORD with true contrition and meekness of heart.

But what means and what remedy is there for this grievous disease of sin, thus working and too often residing and ruling in those that have in Baptism died unto sin to live again unto Righteousness? There is but one Physician, one great Healer of soul and body from sin: the same Who at first made us whole in Baptism, by joining and knitting us unto HIMSELF, and making us partakers of His own Righteousness and Holiness. HE, and HE only,

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 15.

can save us when we have become diseased anew; and amongst His Divine remedies, the most sacred and effectual of all is the partaking of His most Blessed Flesh and Blood. These HE offers to us now for the healing of the whole man, the healing and preservation unto eternal life, both of body and soul. And thus, on Christmas-day, while we thank HIM for that HE took upon HIM our flesh and blood, and joined it to His own GODHEAD, we shall receive from HIM verily and indeed, though how, we know not, that very Flesh and Blood, that we, partaking of them, may dwell in HIM and HE in us; that our sinful flesh may be made clean and holy by the most Holy Flesh, which the SON of GOD at this season took upon HIM: and thus our souls may be washed by His most precious Blood, which at this season first flowed in His veins, afterwards to be poured out for our Redemption.

As truly, then, as the shepherds found HIM that day at Bethlehem in the form of a child, so shall we find HIM on Christmas-day, if we seek HIM aright, in the most Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

Bethlehem means the "House of Bread," and doubtless, that city was so called because the Bread of GOD was there first to appear; but each Christian Church now is Bethlehem, the house and dwelling-place of that Bread of GOD which came down from Heaven, which Bread we may here find, and feed upon it, to the preservation of body and soul to an endless and all-glorious life.

Do we doubt of any of these surpassing mysteries of GOD's love? Do we doubt that GOD became Flesh for our salvation? Nay, bring but repentance of heart and true faith to the table of the LORD, and thou shalt receive His Flesh and His Blood: thou shalt receive His Body to have within thee the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, for to dwell with thee, to endow thee anew with grace, to strengthen thee against thine enemies, to comfort thee with Their presence. Thou shalt receive His Flesh to endow thee with everlasting righteousness, to assure thee of everlasting bliss, and life both in soul and body. Doubt not of the truth of this matter, how great and high soever these things be. It becometh GOD to do no small deeds, however impossible they may seem to thee. Pray to GOD that thou mayest have

faith to perceive this great mystery, that the Word became Flesh, GOD'S SON became man; that by faith thou mayest certainly believe nothing to be impossible with GOD. Only bring thou faith to CHRIST'S most Holy Word and Sacrament; and let thy purpose of amendment, and obedience of the heart to GOD'S law, henceforth declare thy true belief⁵. Let us then keep it ever imprinted in our hearts, that our GOD is near us, is among us, is even in us; that HE is offering us means continually of renewing our union, when our sins have, in any degree, made a separation between us and our GOD. And now especially HE invites us by the voice of His Church to make glad remembrance on the Day of His Birth, of that great mystery of His taking our flesh upon HIM, by approaching most near to HIM, and receiving His Flesh and Blood, for the spiritual sustenance both of body and soul. To come thus near HIM in unrepented sin, is to bring upon ourselves condemnation and death; but to refuse His invitation because we are not resolved to leave our sins, is to draw back from His service, and to provoke His displeasure by our thankless indifference. There is but one safe way, one way by which we can hope to gain His favour, and that is, to come near unto HIM now that HE calls us, and to come near with trembling and sorrow for our past sins, like that sinful woman who once washed His sacred feet with her tears. Let us move ourselves to godly fear and lasting sorrow for our past offences, and let us pray, and endeavour to begin at once, even this week, a better course of life than we have ever yet led, more diligently employed in GOD'S service, less worldly, less inconsistent. Let us be more diligent in the use of all means of grace, such as reading GOD'S word, and prayer both at home and here. Above all, let us cleanse ourselves from any lukewarmness in GOD'S service, or any opposition of our will to that of GOD. Let us shun all acts, or words, and thoughts, that may defile the soul in His sight, unto Whom we are to draw so near. And let us rejoice, indeed, at Christmas, but let us rejoice in the LORD, as the Church now teaches us to do out of the Bible; but not in the world or in the flesh; and above all, let us not find our pleasure, like some do at this season, in riot and sinful intempe-

⁵ See the Homily of the Resurrection.

rance. Surely, it is more than ordinary unthankfulness to make Christmas a time of increased sin. And let us rejoice, not with vain presumption, but with trembling and awe, remembering we are sinners, grievous sinners before our GOD, though we may trust we have found mercy.

Finally, when we are preparing to draw near to HIM, at His call, in the holy mysteries of the LORD'S Supper, in remembrance of His first Coming, let us think of the time when we shall be suddenly called to meet HIM at His second Coming to judgment. You may refuse His call now, but another call will, ere long, be heard, which we cannot refuse. You may come to the Table of the LORD, or stay away from it now, as you choose; but when summoned to His Judgment you *must* come, and account for every means of grace, every opportunity that you have rejected, or made ineffectual for your Salvation.

Now you may refuse to kneel at His worship, but we shall all see the day when "every knee shall bow to HIM²," either in joy or terror. Think, I beseech you, whether it will not be a fearful reflection that you have refused to kneel to HIM now.

"Who may abide the day of His Coming? who shall stand when HE appeareth³?" Where will those be then, who feign themselves to, be other than they are; then, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed? Where will they be who have refused to draw near to GOD on earth, or to confess HIM before men? For it is said, "If we deny HIM, HE also will deny us⁴."

Oh! let us try to consider now, before it will be too late, what will be our condition on that day should HE then deny us. According as we are used to meet HIM now, so must we meet HIM then. May GOD, therefore, in His great mercy, grant that like as we are soon to make glad remembrance of His Birth, so we may with sure confidence and joy unspeakable behold HIM⁵ looking on us with pity when HE shall come to be our Judge.

² Rom. xiv. 11.

³ Mal. iii. 2.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

⁵ See Collect for First Communion on Christmas-day in Edward VI.'s first book.

SERMON CCXXXVII.

THE WORD MADE FLESH

ST. JOHN i. 14.

“ And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

THE Holy Gospel for any Sunday or Holy day should be regarded as the chief Scripture lesson for that day.

It may seem, therefore, at first sight, remarkable, that on this blessed day, when we are met together to keep the remembrance of the Birth of our LORD, the Holy Gospel speaks hardly a word of that Birth. In the Second Lesson, indeed, there is a full account of that glorious event, taken out of St. Luke's Gospel; there is another in St. Matthew, which will be read as the Gospel for next Sunday. In them you hear of Angels coming as messengers from Heaven, bearing peace and good-will to man, and with tidings of the fulfilment of all the ancient prophecies, and of the birth of a SAVIOUR, a LORD, and a KING, of Whose Kingdom was to be no end, Who was to be called “ EMMANUEL, that is, GOD with us.” But in the Gospel for to-day, the very day of our LORD's Birth, we find not a word about the circumstances of that Birth, but we are only told, that “ The WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of Grace and Truth.” The reason of this is, that the chief object of the Church in her services for to-day, is to make one great truth sink down into our minds: a truth which it is most necessary for our salvation we should fully believe, for it lies at the foundation of all true Christianity. It is this, that HE Who, as on this day, appeared at Bethlehem as a

helpless babe, is the true, the very GOD, by Whom and for Whose pleasure earth and Heaven, men and Angels, were all made, and Whom all things worship and serve.

In the fourth chapter of Revelation, and in two places of the Prophet Ezekiel, four living creatures are described as standing about the throne of God, these have always been believed to signify the four Gospels. Now of these it is said, "The fourth was like a flying eagle;" so that St. John's Gospel is likened to the eagle: and this because it bears us up at once as on eagles' wings into the Heaven of Heavens, to the inmost presence of GOD, back into eternity, and unto the Beginning, which was before all time.

Our LORD is not here called JESUS, for that is the Name HE bore as man (though that Name is now set above all names), neither is HE called CHRIST, that is, "The ANOINTED," for it was as man that HE received that ANOINTING, which proceeded from HIM as GOD, but HE is here distinguished by such names only as pertain to HIM as GOD; HE is called The WORD, and "The ONLY-BEGOTTEN from the FATHER."

If you would know why HE is called The WORD, I would say, it is because HE has even from the first declared to us the Will and Counsel of the FATHER, somewhat as a man's word or speech declares his will to his fellow-creatures; moreover, a holy man in old time has observed, that "in order we may not, when we hear HIM called The ONLY-BEGOTTEN, think of any birth as among ourselves,' therefore St. John calls HIM 'The WORD;' and then, lest we should confound HIM with the written Word, HE calls HIM THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON."

"Who can tell His generation," how HE is the SON of the FATHER? Yet this much we know, and this much we are bound to believe, as we would be saved, that as GOD the FATHER was always GOD, so was HE also always the FATHER. There was a time when none of the worlds we see were made; yea, we may go back, in thought, far beyond that time into eternity, before even Angels or Archangels were created; and this is what St. John means by "the Beginning," saying, "In the Beginning was The WORD." This Beginning was before time itself began, before any thing was made. GOD was then from everlasting the FATHER of an only SON; of a SON perfectly equal to His FATHER, of the

same Substance, Power, and Eternity, existing from everlasting to everlasting, like the FATHER. "In the Beginning was The WORD," that is, the SON, "and The WORD was with GOD [the FATHER], and The WORD was GOD," as the FATHER is GOD, "The SAME was in the Beginning with GOD."

This eternal WORD and SON (being thus the true and eternal GOD) made all things, the earth and all the worlds that we see in the Heavens, and those beyond our sight, the Angels also, and all the glorious powers of Heaven, Which, being spirits, cannot be seen. "All things were made by HIM, and without HIM was not any thing," no, not one thing, "made which was made." These are the words of St. JOHN in the Gospel for the day, and to this same truth St. Paul also is brought forward as another witness in the Epistle, saying that by HIM the FATHER made the worlds¹. As, also, in another place in the Epistle to the Colossians, he says again of HIM, "By HIM were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth²."

Now this same glorious Being, the true and eternal GOD, came into this world, as on this day, to save us miserable sinners. HE came, as you know, not in His own glory, "but HE made HIMSELF of no reputation³," or, as it would be rendered more literally, "emptied HIMSELF of all His Majesty, and became Flesh." HE took upon HIMSELF, indeed, our whole nature, both soul and body; but St. John speaks rather of His becoming flesh, because that herein appears the more wonderful humility: had HE taken to HIMSELF a human soul only, that is at least the nobler part of us that bears the image of GOD, but HE took our flesh also: the flesh we have in common with the brutes of the field; and which is *in us*, so full of sin and evil, that it is especially spoken of as opposed to the SPIRIT OF GOD: "The flesh lusteth against the SPIRIT," saith St. Paul, "so that ye cannot do the things that ye would⁴." And therefore when we come to GOD we renounce the flesh.

But GOD forbid that we should so account of that Flesh which the SON of GOD now took upon HIM; that Flesh being framed by the power of the HOLY GHOST, was pure from all sin, though being very flesh, it was full of weakness, liable to every

¹ Heb. i. 2.² Col. i. 16.³ Phil. ii. 7.⁴ Gal. v. 17.

pain and suffering to which we are exposed, and so continuing until, after His Resurrection, it became spiritual, glorified Flesh. Then His Body, we find, could pass through closed doors, could appear suddenly, could vanish, could mount up above all Heavens, even to the Throne of God, where It is now glorified for ever. And we now, partaking of that Flesh, become partakers, in measure, of the Divine Nature, of GOD'S own Nature, Which is joined to It. This seems a great and wonderful thing to say, that we are partakers of GOD'S own Nature; but this truth is plainly declared to us by GOD'S own Word, which cannot err. St. Peter, at the beginning of his second Epistle, expressly declares that "by the exceeding great and precious promises God has given us, we may become partakers of the Divine Nature."

This is a most wonderful secret of GOD'S love. GOD the SON, the Word of the FATHER, has taken on HIM our flesh, on purpose that we, being made members of HIM, might partake of His Divine Life, both in soul and body; so that if we abide in HIM by obedient love, and by a diligent use of the means of grace unto the end, not only do our souls live in HIM, being knit unto HIM, but our very bodies are members of HIM, so long as we are in grace; "For know ye not," saith St. Paul, "that your bodies are the members of CHRIST⁵;" members of HIM Who now sits glorified at God's right hand? Thus are we raised unto God in Heaven, by GOD stooping down to us on earth, and vouchsafing to be made man for our salvation.

Let us endeavour to set HIM before us, first, as HE this day appeared,—a babe; the child, as HE seemed, of parents so poor, so little accounted of amongst men, that they could not even obtain a place for HIM in the meanest house, but were obliged to lay HIM in the manger of the inn stable. And yet what was HE really? What do all Christians believe HIM to be? "GOD manifest in the Flesh⁶." "HE was in the world, and the world was made by HIM, and the world knew HIM not. HE came unto His own, and His own received HIM not⁷."

What shocking unthankfulness would it be in us, if we suffered ourselves to think less of His greatness and of His GODHEAD, because HE laid aside His Glory, and became man, and appeared

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 13.

⁶ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

⁷ John i. 10, 11.

in such mean condition amongst men, from His Love to us! Therefore, the Church takes such pains to set before our faith in every way that great and most necessary truth, that this Child, in Whose Birth we this day rejoice, is the true and eternal GOD, "Who took upon HIMSELF the form of man," "was found in fashion as a man⁷," that HE might thus, by yielding up the Body HE has now taken upon HIM, to sufferings and death, save us from our sins. The Church makes us declare with our own lips this day, in the Creed of St. Athanasius, that HE is perfect GOD and perfect Man, and that to believe HIM to be this is one chief part of the Catholic Faith, *i. e.* of the faith held by all Churches from the beginning; "Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." And it is in order to establish this great truth in our minds, as the very truth of GOD, that in the Epistle and Gospel it rather speaks of our SAVIOUR's glory as GOD, than of His birth as man this day. And let us both strive and pray that these things may sink deep down into our hearts, that we may thus be established in this true faith. Let us make it our habit earnestly and continually to pray to GOD that HE would, of His great mercy, keep us from ever being tempted to entertain any unworthy thoughts of HIM, Who humbled HIMSELF, and appeared as a man, yes, and mean amongst men, only from His great love to us.

And if you should, any of you, ever hear any one say things about our LORD, contrary to the Catholic Faith, at all contrary to what the Church teaches in the Creeds, you cannot avoid such a person too anxiously. There is a very old history, which there is every reason to believe, concerning the beloved Apostle St. John, that he found himself once in the same house with one who professing himself a Christian, had questioned whether our LORD were truly GOD. It is said, as soon as St. John knew it, he immediately rushed out of that house, as from a place in which there was a pestilence, or on which God's most terrible judgments might be expected to fall. He was not unwilling to be in the company of Heathens, but he could not bear to be under the same roof with a professed Christian who denied our LORD to be GOD. ,

Few persons, indeed, feel like this now; but is not this very

⁷ Phil. ii. 7.

fact a plain proof that we are less jealous for our SAVIOUR'S honour? The Church, however, still speaks on this matter in the same tone as from the beginning. She instructs us in the truth of His GODHEAD in the very words of the Bible; and warns us, moreover, of the dreadful consequences of letting slip those truths. And those who leave the Church for the sects of dissenters, do, in this respect, as in others also, put themselves into danger, of which we do well, surely, to warn them with tender and affectionate earnestness. For if we once cast off the Creeds of the Church, who can tell what we shall believe?

It may be said, indeed, that they still receive the Bible, and that while they hold the Scriptures they cannot go far from the truth. But to that there is this plain answer, that those who openly deny our LORD'S GODHEAD, the Socinians, as they are called, still profess to receive the Scriptures; showing that men may read them, and yet like those of whom St. Peter speaks at the end of his last Epistle, "they wrest them unto their own destruction^s." But if we listen to the teaching of the Church, and repeat her Prayers and her Creeds continually with our hearts as well as with our lips, it is plainly quite impossible that we should ever question our LORD'S GODHEAD. For in the Litany do we not pray to HIM as GOD the SON? in the Nicene Creed do we not say every Sunday and holy day, that we believe HIM to be very GOD of very GOD, of the same substance with the FATHER? And must it not be a great privilege of the members of the Church to be thus secured from any danger of falling into an error so very wicked, so certain to ruin them who are led away by it?

But in order either to be secured from deadly error, or to hold even the truth to any profit, the Creeds of the Church must be in our hearts as well as on our lips. Though we were never to doubt about our SAVIOUR'S being GOD, yet if we did not think about it, if we did not give our hearts and minds to the truth, and pray and strive that we may live suitably to it, we have no saving faith in CHRIST'S GODHEAD. What can it profit us to say we believe HIM to be GOD, if we do not worship HIM and obey HIM as GOD? "Why call ye ME, LORD, LORD," HE saith HIM-

^s 2 Peter iii. 16.

SELF, "and do not the things which I command you?" It is by continually worshipping and serving CHRIST, that we shall best strengthen our faith in CHRIST'S GODHEAD.

Is HE set before us to-day as lying a helpless infant in a manger? Let us, according to the teaching of the Church, strive to consider that this Babe is the Eternal Word, the co-equal SON of GOD; and the more we do this, the better we shall be able to understand and feel the Angels' song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men," joining with them in worshipping EMMANUEL, that is, "GOD with us." Only, as I just said, let us look well to ourselves, that our worship be sincere; that we mean to obey HIM and keep His sayings, and to copy the Pattern of humility and holiness HE has set us, that we may praise HIM in our lives as well as with our lips. For in vain do they worship HIM whose hearts are far from HIM; and our hearts, we may be sure, *are* far from HIM, if our lives be not conformed to His Example and His Will. And now when we are, a few of us at least, to receive that Flesh which HE, as at this day, took upon HIM, and that most precious Blood, which, as at this day, began to flow in His veins, waiting for the time when it should be poured forth for our Salvation; now, I say, when about to receive HIM for our Spiritual Food, let us remember Who HE is, let us lift up our hearts unto HIM in Heaven. Let us strive to think of HIM as on the throne of GOD, with the Cherubim and Seraphim around HIM, ever adoring HIM with that song in which we shall now venture to join beneath their feet,—*"Holy, Holy, Holy LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory."* And as HE vouchsafed, for our sake, to be laid this day in a manger in a stable, may HE also vouchsafe to come and dwell in the houses of our souls and bodies, though they be, alas! through our manifold sins, in ruin and decay, and still more unworthy for that most Holy ONE to dwell in! When on earth HE drove out of His visible Temple them that were polluting it by worldly traffic, may HE now of His mercy and His zeal for our Salvation, drive out our sins and bad passions from our hearts and souls, and may HE enter in again, and so may HE

⁹ Luke vi. 46.

ever dwell in us, making us every day more fit for His indwelling! If we were but humble and contrite, full of deep and sincere sorrow, and shame for our past sins, then we might humbly hope HE would be pleased to dwell in us. "For thus saith the High and Lofty ONE, that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth¹."

¹ Isaiah lvii. 15, 16.

SERMON CCXXXVIII.

THE HIDDEN GOD.

ST. LUKE ii. 16.

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.”

It is said in the Bible that GOD is a GOD that hideth HIMSELF : “Verily THOU art a GOD that hidest THYSELF, O GOD of Israel, the SAVIOUR ¹.” And yet there is nothing of which we are more sure than this, that if any man will heartily, and by all appointed means, seek and feel after the LORD, he will not fail to find HIM ; for not only doth HE promise that he that seeks shall find HIM, but HE even saith, “I am found of them that sought ME not ².” Whence we may learn, that GOD hides HIMSELF from some, and makes HIMSELF known to others, as in His unsearchable wisdom and justice HE thinks good.

And this appears plainly in the history of our LORD and SAVIOUR, “GOD manifest in the Flesh ³.” GOD’s own SON, being the true and eternal GOD, had taken upon HIM our flesh, and had been born into the world. This most wondrous fact, surpassing all wonders that had ever entered into the heart of man, had actually taken place. This most holy CHILD was born,—born into the world of which HE HIMSELF was the MAKER. And yet of the many thousands, and hundreds of thousands, of the men that HE

¹ Isaiah xlv. 15.

² Ibid. lxx. 1.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

had made, who were then dwelling on the face of His earth, who knew it? To the blessed Virgin, to the righteous Joseph, and to the humble Elisabeth, the mother of the Baptist, it was made known that this, the holy CHILD, was the SON of GOD, GOD with us, the LORD. It seems reasonable to believe, that to Zacharias, also, this great secret was revealed; but from all the rest of the world, it would appear, it was completely hidden. The same GOD who had hidden HIMSELF in light unapproachable in Heaven, was now hidden, as it were, in the form of a babe in swaddling clothes, in some poor stable. And even to those that were about HIM, HE seemed to be no more than any other child of poor and mean parents. GOD was there before them in the form of man, but they knew not of His presence.

But yet there were a few others whom even then, immediately after the birth, GOD chose out of the Jewish nation, that HE should make known unto them the new-born SAVIOUR, the anointed LORD. And who were these? Were they among the great or learned among the scribes, or chief-priests, or interpreters of the Law? No; it pleased GOD to pass by these, and to make known His blessed SON to poor, unlettered shepherds. Neither is it said, that these shepherds were searching the Holy Scriptures, or fasting and praying, like Cornelius was when the Angel appeared to him, and told him to send for St. Paul; but they were engaged in their common work, "doing their duty in that state of life to which GOD had called them,"—they were "keeping watch over their flock by night ⁴."

And herein our tender and merciful FATHER is giving great comfort for poor people who are obliged to work hard for their bread late at night and early in the morning. Let them only do their duty as in His sight, and strive, amid their earthly employments, to raise their thoughts to their MAKER, and HE will be mindful of them, and visit them, and make known unto them, in the depths of their hearts, the secrets of His love. Yes; it may be HE will unfold HIMSELF to them, rather than to those who have more time for the study of the things of GOD, and can bring much more of man's wisdom to assist them in it. Doubtless there were, then, among the scribes and lawyers, persons

⁴ Luke ii. 8.

who knew every word of the Old Testament, and could put a meaning on it all, and who used to teach men when the CHRIST was to come, and by what signs they might know HIM. But from all these CHRIST, when HE came, was hid; when HE was among them, they knew it not; but GOD revealed HIM, made HIM known to a few poor humble-minded shepherds. What, then, are the poor and unlearned to learn from this? Are they to distrust the teaching of those who are set over them, from a confidence that GOD will HIMSELF teach them inwardly by His SPIRIT, like as these shepherds were taught outwardly by a message of an Angel? Far from it. If any refuse to listen to those whom GOD has set over them in His Church, they disobey a plain commandment of GOD, Who has said, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls⁵." And can they, while this disobedience, this pride, is in their hearts, expect GOD should account them worthy that HE should teach them, apart from those means, which they have in pride and wilfulness thrust away? For why are the learned rejected? and why are the ignorant rather counted worthy of Heavenly teaching? Is it not because the ignorant are often more humble-minded than the learned? But they are not so always. Sometimes, nay, often, you will find ignorant people, who are very confident about their knowledge of religion, very fond of their own opinions; then they have the sin that too often attaches itself to human learning. And though it be true that learning with pride only darkens the mind, yet ignorance with pride and self-will darkens it no less. The first step towards Heavenly wisdom in all men, learned and unlearned, is a deep and true lowliness of heart. They that have this are always willing to receive instruction, especially from those who are duly appointed to instruct them. And it is to such simple souls that GOD has always been pleased to make known HIMSELF and His holy will. And mark how these show their humbleness of mind and teachableness, by the way in which they receive instruction. These shepherds, doubtless, like the other Jews, expected that the CHRIST, or Anointed SAVIOUR, Whom their Prophets foretold, would come as a great King and Conqueror, Who should deliver their country from the power of the Romans, as Moses had

⁵ Heb. xiii. 17.

saved their ancestors out of Egypt. It must have been, therefore, a trial to their faith, to find HIM in the lowest poverty, thrust out even from the meanest houses, laid in the manger in the inn stable. But yet, like St. Paul, they were not disobedient to the Heavenly vision, but went, as they were directed, into Bethlehem, to search there for their New-Born SAVIOUR, CHRIST THE LORD, to search for HIM, not as they had expected HE would come, but as GOD had told them, as a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger. They were not unrewarded: they found HIM, HIM Whom truly to know is eternal life, they found HIM in the manger, with the Blessed Virgin and righteous Joseph at His side; and through them was HE also revealed unto others: for it is said, that "when they had seen It, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds ⁶."

But it is not said that, like the shepherds, they came in haste to see the New-Born CHRIST; they were struck with what the shepherds said; they wondered at it, but they did not act upon it. Is it not so too often with us? A sermon or a lesson out of the Bible, or a Psalm, strikes our feelings with awe, and it may be with something like remorse for our past sins, which are brought awfully before us; we wonder at our own sinfulness, and God's holiness and goodness, but instead of going with haste unto CHRIST, to abide with HIM and in HIM henceforth continually by holy obedience, we go back to the world again, to the busy pursuits or anxious cares of this life; and CHRIST, Who has in a manner manifested HIMSELF, hides HIMSELF again. And in this way we displease GOD, and harden our own hearts; for GOD does not show HIMSELF unto us, that we should merely gaze upon HIM with idle wonder, and pass away. Surely this grievous dishonour to HIM is a fearful sin. But yet, if we were to search into ourselves, how many of us are guilty of it!

Perhaps the most painful fact is this, that they are many, now, who would like to go on in this way all their lives: I mean, they like to have the holiness and goodness of GOD from time to time set before them in affecting language, so that their feelings

⁶ Luke ii. 17, 18.

may be much moved by it, while yet all the time they are living on in much the same kind of life, from first to last, without any growth in practical holiness. They trust in these feelings as proofs that they are accepted with GOD, and that GOD's grace is in their hearts, forgetting that GOD has distinctly said, we are to be judged according to our works, and that if we would know whether we really love HIM, we must look and see whether we keep His Commandments: and that the fact of having had these truths set before them, will, if they do not act according to them, only increase their condemnation. The shepherds, on the contrary, went in haste unto the place where the Angel had told them they should find CHRIST.

May GOD put it into our hearts to follow their example; like them to search out CHRIST where GOD has told us we shall really find HIM, and that without delay! Nor are we to look for HIM in any very different place or condition from that in which the shepherds found HIM. They found HIM in a shed, amongst the very poorest, amongst those who, like HIMSELF, had scarcely a place where to lay their heads.

One of the surest ways of having CHRIST present with us, is to seek for HIM, and strive to be doing HIM service continually in the persons of the poor and needy. For whatever we do unto them we do unto HIM. Let us search out the hungry, the naked, the sick, and the afflicted, and to the utmost of our power, help and comfort them; and in this way we are sure of being brought most near to CHRIST, Who, as I have before now told you, is present in a person who is in need or affliction, almost as HE is in a Sacrament. So that the blessed influence of His Presence is continually imparted to those who are continually employed in succouring and comforting the needy and the afflicted, as it would have been, (in measure at least,) had they ministered to our LORD HIMSELF in the days when HE was on earth.

And again, HE has said, that "where two or three are gathered together, there HE is in the midst of them⁷;" so that HE has given us, in this way again, a sign where we may hope to meet HIM, as truly as the Angel gave the sign to the shepherds. We

⁷ Matt. xviii. 20.

are as sure to find HIM in the Church, as they were to find HIM in the manger. If *they* had the assurance of an angel, *we* have more, for we have His own Word.

And in the Holy Communion we have again His own Word assuring us, concerning the bread, "THIS IS MY BODY," concerning the cup, "THIS IS MY BLOOD;" so that we are quite sure that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper we have HIM present with us, and do verily receive HIM to be the Food and Life of our bodies and souls. The manger was not a surer sign to the shepherds that CHRIST was there, than the consecrated Bread and Cup are now to the faithful. But, like as it was then, so is it now also, many of those who came very near to GOD manifest in the Flesh, knew not, thought not HE was there. For, as we may believe, rude and thoughtless men behaved before HIM when HE was on earth, just as if HE was no more than any other man, as even His brethren, that is, His near relations, we are plainly told, did not believe HIM⁸; and even so, I say, it is now.

HE is here in our Churches. We are quite sure, that when two or three of us are met together, HE is here. But do we not see people behave as if they had no kind of belief, no thought that CHRIST is here? They do not kneel or worship HIM when they enter in here and first come before HIM; nay, when the Priest and others are kneeling, they are content to sit; would they sit if they *saw* CHRIST here? but are they not as sure HE is really here, when they have His own plain Word for it? "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of you." Do we not believe HIM?

Or, again, if we were asked why all the Jews did not come like the shepherds to worship GOD manifest in the flesh at Bethlehem, we should answer, they did not know of it, they had no thought HE was there. No one had told them. And when CHRIST is here day after day, in the midst of two or three assembled together to worship HIM, why are not all Christians anxious, why are not all willing to take journeys, to suffer inconvenience, to give up every thing except the duties HE lays upon them, that they come like the shepherds day by day to search out their

⁸ John vii. 5.

SAVIOUR, and to abide with HIM as much as possible? Is it that they have no thought that HE is really here in the midst of those who meet to worship HIM? And yet they have not the excuse of ignorance; HE has told them HE is here.

And I need not say how all this applies most strongly to the service of the Holy Communion. If we do not believe HIM to be verily and indeed present there, where can we believe HIM to be present? or how can we be said to believe His Word?

But if we do believe HIM to be present in the Holy Communion, how can you turn away from HIM? To whom do you mean to go? Is not this HE Who alone can give you pardon and life? Or how is it you can draw near without awe?

This is Bethlehem—for Bethlehem means “the House of Bread.” And this is the house where ye may have the Bread that came down from Heaven. Neither, although we see HIM not, although we do not know how HE is present, is HE less truly present than HE was, when the shepherds found HIM at Bethlehem, by the sign the Angels had given them.

END OF VOL. VII.







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